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THE SYMBOL IN SERMONS

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A SERIES OF TWENTY-FIVE SHORT SERMONS
ON THE ARTICLES OF THE CREED

→88←

A COMPANION VOLUME

TO

THE SYMBOL OF THE APOSTLES

BY

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RECTOR

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✠ JOHN M. FARLEY, D.D.,
Archbishop of New York.

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THE SYMBOL IN SERMONS.

I.

“I BELIEVE.”

INTRODUCTION. Two things necessary to salvation, to believe and to do. Faith comes first, good works follow. The sum of our faith in the Creed.

1. Faith the root of the spiritual life. St. Paul defines for us what faith is. Two ways of coming to a knowledge of truth, seeing and believing. Two kinds of faith, human and divine. How God speaks to us.
2. The unseen the formal object of faith. No assent without a rational motive. The motive of belief is testimony. Testimony human and divine.
3. Faith above nature for two reasons. Three orders of divinely revealed truths, the highest being mysteries. Conclusion. Faith a precious possession: let us thank God for it.

To believe and to do, these are the two things needful to salvation—to believe what God teaches, to do what God commands. And as the Decalogue, or Ten Commandments, is the sum of our duty to God and our neighbor,

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the sum of what we are bound to do, so the Creed is the sum of our faith, of what we are bound to believe. Faith comes first ; duty, conduct, good works come after. It is the fashion nowadays with those whose forefathers held faith to be the one thing needful, to put conduct before faith, so that it has become almost an axiom with them that it matters little what man believes if only he does what is right. But it is written that “ without faith it is impossible to please God,” and that the “ just man liveth by faith.” The two must go together, but in the order named, faith first, and then conduct ; for the works which avail unto salvation are such only as are good in God’s eyes, pleasing in His sight, and we have His own word for it that they cannot be so unless they rest on the foundation of faith.

Faith then is the basis of Christian conduct, the root of the spiritual life, the germ which God plants in the soul to bear fruit unto life everlasting. And, as I have said, the sum of our faith is in the Creed. The whole body of Christian doctrine grows, as it were, out of the germinal truths that are there briefly set forth.

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The Creed is the depository of our faith, a storehouse of divine knowledge, a rich mine from which have been brought forth the priceless gems of truth which deck the brow of Christ's holy Spouse, the Church of God on earth.

"I believe in God the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth," such is the first article of the Apostles' Creed. We will begin at the beginning. What is it we mean when we repeat these first words of the Creed, "I believe?" We mean to make an act of faith in all that follows. And what is faith? Faith, St. Paul tells us, is "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things unseen." To understand this, we must bear in mind that faith is a source of knowledge, a means of knowing the truth. Now there are two ways in which we may know the truth; by seeing it with the light of our own reason and for ourselves, and by learning it from those who know it and who can be trusted not to deceive us. There are some things which we can find out for ourselves, either because they are self-evident, as that the sun is in the sky, and that the

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whole is greater than its part ; or because they are so bound up with what is self-evident that we can reason them out, as when we infer from the presence of smoke that there is fire, it being self-evident that there can be no effect without a cause. But there are many things we cannot know in this way. Indeed the great bulk of what we do know we are not able to see for ourselves, to verify ; we take it on trust from others. We should not even know who our parents were if we were not told of it, if we were left to find it out for ourselves without being told. This then is faith, to believe what another tells us, to assent to a thing on the word of another.

The disposition, the readiness to believe, is natural to man. The child, in whom we find human nature unspoilt, never dreams of doubting what he is told. It is only as he grows up, and finds that men sometimes deceive him, that he learns to distrust.

Now this taking a thing on the word of man is human faith. To take it on the word of God is divine faith, an act of the intellect assenting, through God's co-operating grace, to

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a truth divinely revealed. But God does not speak personally and directly to each individual. Revealed truth comes to man from without, not from within ; for “faith cometh by hearing.” God speaks to us by His ambassadors. He spoke of old by Moses and the prophets. In the fulness of time, He spoke by His Only Begotten Son ; now He speaks by those whom the Son has sent to teach all nations unto the end of time,—sent as His ambassadors and the dispensers of His mysteries, teachers of the Church which He built on the Rock and against which the gates of hell shall not prevail.

We can now the better understand what St. Paul means when he says that faith is “the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things unseen.” The words that come last, express the motive and formal object of faith. The unseen is the distinctive object of this virtue. What is seen, that is to say, what is self-evident or deducible by process of reasoning from that which is self-evident, we cannot, strictly and properly speaking, be said to believe at all ; we know it, and therefore, need

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not, and do not take it on the word of another. And this is true of human as well as of divine faith. But we cannot as rational beings assent to the unseen without evidence or testimony, which is the motive of faith. If the testimony be that of man, we have human faith ; if it be that of God, we have divine faith. Now human testimony is liable to error ; a human witness may be mistaken himself, or he may purposely mislead us. On the other hand, divine testimony is free from the very possibility of error, for the God of all truth can neither be deceived Himself nor deceive us. Hence, while human faith, resting as it does on the fallible word of man, is weak, often wavers, and is uncertain, divine faith knows no wavering, no uncertainty, because it rests on God's unerring word.

Human faith is in the order of nature ; divine faith is in the order of grace, the higher or supernatural order. And it is above nature for two reasons ; (1) because its material object, as theologians call it, that is to say, the truths which we believe by divine faith, is beyond the reach of human reason. Reason by its own

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unaided light could never at all have known these truths. They were hidden in God, who, as the Apostle tells us, "dwells in inaccessible light," and were revealed that man might learn them. The light in which they are seen is not the light of reason, but the light of revelation, that is God's own light. Certain of these truths which were hidden in God are such that we cannot fully understand them even after they have been made known to us by revelation. These are called mysteries. There are others that we can understand more or less fully, but that we could never have known had they not been revealed ; for instance, the existence of angels, the fall of some of them, the annunciation by the Angel Gabriel. Finally, there are truths which reason, if not in the case of all men at least in the case of some, could know by its own light, and which nevertheless, as a matter of fact, are contained in the revelation that God has given to man. Such, for example, is the existence of God, which is not in itself an object of divine faith, but rather a preamble to faith, that is to say, something that goes before and pre-

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pares the way for faith. Such, again, are, at least in substance, the commandments ; for just as reason itself teaches us that there is a God, so it teaches us that He is to be worshipped, so it teaches us that we should honor our parents, so it teaches that we should not murder, or steal, or bear false witness. And why then, you will ask, were these truths revealed ? Because it was needful that all, and not some only, should know these truths, should know them too, with certainty, and without admixture of error. Had they not been revealed, few could have known them, and these few only after great study and research, and even then with an element of uncertainty, perhaps, about them, or of error mixed up with them. And then again, because in the case of practical truths, truths that bear on conduct, the commandments and counsels namely, if God had not Himself revealed them and added His sanction, no one would feel bound to shape his life and conduct by them.

I will next show that faith is not only above nature, beyond the reach of human reason, as regards the truths which we believe, but also

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above nature as regards the very act itself ; in other words, that it is beyond the natural power of man's intellect to elicit an act of faith, and that for this is needed a special grace of God. In the meantime let us thank God for this priceless gift. Ours the faith which Christ founded, which the Apostles preached, which has gone forth into all the world and lived through all the ages, which holds together at this day the ends of the earth, the faith for which the martyrs shed their blood. It is our birthright as Catholics and surely our fathers in the faith could not have bequeathed us a nobler heritage. Let us live by it and up to it ; let us cherish it as our most precious possession ; let us suffer nothing to tarnish its purity, or dim its lustre, or weaken its influence over us.

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II.

“I BELIEVE.”

1. Both the habit and the act of faith are supernatural in two ways; (a) in themselves, (b) in their object. The object, again, may be supernatural in itself, or only in relation to certain minds.
2. An act of faith supposes a supernatural disposition to believe, which is the habit of faith.
3. Faith may be dead, or living, or lively; explicit or implicit. Every Christian is required to believe certain truths explicitly. Wilful doubt of any explicitly defined truth of revelation saps divine faith.

Conclusion. We are bound to make profession of the faith. Let us not be ashamed of it, but confess it openly.

DIVINE faith, as we have seen, is a supernatural virtue which enables us to believe, that is, to receive with the firm and undoubting assent of the mind, the truths which God has revealed. When by the help of divine grace, we so assent to any truth that is divinely revealed, we are said to make an act of faith. I have already remarked that this act, and of

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course the habit from which it springs, is supernatural, or above nature, in two ways, in itself, and in its object. Its object is a truth beyond the order of nature, beyond the reach of human reason when left to itself. There are stars in the firmament so far away that we cannot see them with the naked eye. In like manner there are truths so lofty that the unassisted reason of man could never know them at all. They were hidden in God, who dwells as the Apostle tells us, in inaccessible light, hidden until he was pleased to reveal them, i.e., to make them known. Such truths as these, and only such truths as these, are the proper object of divine faith. Besides these there are, as I have already said, truths of the natural order, truths which are not beyond the reach of human reason, contained in the revelation that God has given to man. But they are not an object of divine faith except to those who are unable to know them with certainty by the light of natural reason. Faith is the evidence of things unseen. The unseen, therefore, is the distinctive object of faith, whether the faith be human or divine. To believe a thing is to take it on

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the word of another, and what we see with our own eyes, or by the light of our own reason, we do not take on the word of another ; we know it ourselves. Were a man to tell me that he had a nugget of gold in his possession I should believe him if I knew him for a truthful person ; but if he produced it and showed it to me, then there would be no longer question of believing the man, for I should myself be an eye-witness of the fact.

And as with human so it is with divine faith. The moment a person sees with his own eyes, so to speak, the moment he knows by the light of his own reason a truth which happens also to be contained in revelation, that moment it ceases to be an object of faith to him. It passes from the domain of faith to that of knowledge. Hence theologians tell us that the virtue of faith simply ceases to exist after this life, for the blessed in Heaven see God face to face, and in Him see those truths which now by faith we hold, and which we are said to see as through a glass, darkly.

But not only is the object of faith above nature ; the act itself and the habit or virtue

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which begets it are above nature. It is plain that, as the truth to which we assent when we make an act of faith is beyond the utmost reach of reason, so the assent itself, the act by which we believe the truth, must likewise be beyond the natural capacity of reason. Just as the act by which I assent to a truth of the natural order on the testimony of man supposes a natural disposition to believe, without which I should remain a sceptic, so the act by which I assent to a truth of the supernatural order on the testimony of God, or those who speak for Him, supposes a supernatural disposition to believe, without which I should remain an infidel. This supernatural disposition, grafted on the natural disposition and wrought in the soul by God himself, is the virtue of divine faith. It is God's own gift, an infused virtue. Without it no man can believe with the heart unto righteousness, or take the first step to become a just man in the eyes of God. He may believe the truths which God has revealed, but his faith will be a human faith, not that divine faith which is the gift of God and which is infused into the soul at baptism ; not that divine faith which

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raises man above the natural plane, brings him into communion with God, and puts him on the way that leads to life.

We have now seen what faith is ; the virtue or habit as well as the act which that habit begets. As a virtue or habit faith may be dead, or living, or lively. It is dead in the believer who is in mortal sin ; living in him who is in a state of grace ; not only living, but lively in him who keeps steadily in view the great truths which faith unfolds, brings them vividly home to himself by frequent dwelling upon them, and guides his steps across the desert of this world by the light they shed upon his path.

Again, the act of faith may be either explicit or implicit ; explicit when one assents to a truth which is distinctly placed before the mind ; implicit when one assents to a truth which is not itself distinctly before the mind, but only implied in a truth that is. Thus, when one says, "I believe that Jesus Christ is true God and true Man," one makes an explicit act of faith in the mystery of the Incarnation. But when one says, "I believe all that the holy Catholic Church teaches, for she is the organ

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and teacher of all divine truth," one makes an implicit act of faith in the mystery of the Incarnation, as well as in the other truths that are divinely revealed. Of course we are not required to make an explicit act of faith in every truth that is divinely revealed ; the common run of Christians could not know every truth that God has revealed, nor could perhaps even the most learned theologian. But every Christian is required to believe explicitly what is contained in the Apostles' Creed ; the chief mysteries of religion, the Trinity and Incarnation. Every Christian is required to believe that there is but one God, that in this one God there are three divine persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost ; that the Son of God became Man while still remaining God ; and that He, being at once true God and true Man, suffered death to atone for the sins of all mankind and save all who should believe in Him and keep His commandments.

But while we are not required to make an explicit act of faith in every truth which God has revealed, we must ever be ready to do so if called upon. Thus, before the pontificate

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of Pius Ninth one might call in question the immaculate conception of the Blessed Virgin or the infallibility of the Pope without ceasing to be a Catholic, although these truths were divinely revealed from the beginning. The reason is that the Church had not declared them to be articles of faith up to that time. Now, however, if a Catholic were to deny or call in question either of them he would make shipwreck of the faith and become a heretic. To deny or even wilfully to doubt what has been defined as an article of faith, is to lose the faith altogether. A man may be in mortal sin and still retain the faith, though, as we have seen, his faith is said to be dead because the soul wherein the faith dwells is spiritually dead. The habit or virtue of divine faith, the disposition to believe what God has revealed, remains in the soul. But the man who wilfully denies even one revealed truth, knowing it to be such, commits the sin of heresy, which not only kills the soul like every other mortal sin, but plucks out by the roots and destroys utterly the virtue of divine faith. The virtue of faith is a disposition to believe, and it is

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plain that a man is no longer disposed to believe if he refuses assent to any truth of revelation, since God's word is equally pledged for every one of them, from the greatest to the least.

Not only are we bound to yield an internal assent to what has been divinely revealed, but we are also bound to make open profession of our faith. For, "with the lips profession of faith is made unto salvation." This implies two things. (1) We may never by word or sign or act of ours deny the faith. "He who denies me before men, I will deny him before my Father who is in heaven." (2) We are bound to make open profession of the faith, even at the risk of our lives, when not to do so would be equivalent to a denial of it, or when grave scandal would thereby be given.

Let us not, then, be ashamed of our faith, but confess it openly before men, that the author and finisher thereof, our Blessed Lord and Saviour, may own us for His and admit us into the number of those who kept the faith and now wear the crown.

SERMON THIRD.

III.

“I BELIEVE IN GOD.”

1. Reason witnesses to the existence of God ; also, to the fact of a divine revelation. These are preambles to divine faith.
2. Fourfold proof of God's existence, (a) moral, (b) physical, (c) metaphysical, (d) ethical. Moral proof rests on the testimony of mankind. Analysis of it. Belief in a plurality of gods no prejudice to it.
3. Physical proof based on the order and harmony of the universe, and the evidences of design. No order without law, no law without a law-giver, no adaptation of means to an end without a mind that foresees the end. One or two examples of the use made by men of this argument.

Conclusion. We have not had to reason out for ourselves the existence of God : we have known it from childhood. What return have we made for God's goodness to us ?

THOUGH above reason, faith is not against reason, but rather in fullest harmony with it. It is founded in reason and supplies the shortcomings of reason. Hence St. Paul would have the worship which springs from

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our faith to be a “reasonable service;” and another Apostle bids us to be “always ready to give every one that asks a reason for the hope that is in us,” which is the same as to say the faith that is in us, for hope rests on faith. By the light of reason itself we can know with certainty that there is a God, that is to say a First Cause of all things, Himself uncaused; a Supreme Intelligence from whom is the design, the order and harmony which we discern in the world around us; a Supreme Ruler and Law-giver to whom we are accountable for what we do or leave undone. By the light of reason, also, we can know with certainty that God has given a revelation to man. These two truths, which reason itself teaches, are preambles to faith. They go before faith, prepare the way for it, and make it eminently reasonable; for it would be wholly against reason, once we know with certainty that there is a God and that he has spoken to men, not to believe what He has said. Reason itself thus leads us to the very threshold of the temple of Faith, to the very gate of the Kingdom of God, and bids us enter. Having done so much, it can

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do more. Only by an act of faith can we enter, and faith is above reason, although reason leads up to it. It must ever be borne in mind that intellectual conviction is not faith. The Son of God is ever waiting there at the threshold of the temple, at the gate of His Kingdom, inviting, urging, nay, commanding men to come in. Still He warns them that without His helping hand they cannot enter, as He warned His disciples that without Him they could do nothing. But many, having come up to the very threshold, refuse the proffered help and turn away. There are men in the world to-day who know and are convinced not only that God exists, but that the Catholic Church is God's Kingdom on earth, the temple of the true Faith, and who none the less remain without, in the darkness of heresy or unbelief. The Light still shines in the darkness, and the darkness does not comprehend it. He comes into His own and His own receive Him not. Why this is so we know not; God only knows. It may be because of pride, for faith is God's gift and He bestows it on the humble. "Whosoever does not receive the Kingdom of

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God as a little child," says our Lord, "the same shall not enter into it." Or it may be because of unwillingness to sever some earthly tie, to take up the Cross and follow Christ. One thing is certain; it is man's own fault if, being convinced, he does not believe. He sins against the light, and it will go hard with him at the last day.

Those who have been brought up from childhood in the household of the faith have no need of taking the preliminary steps that I have spoken of to acquire the faith. They are born into the Kingdom of God by baptism, and receive the gift of faith without any act of theirs. With them the existence of God and the fact of a divine revelation are axioms, as it were, which they never dream of questioning.

And yet, in themselves, these two truths are not self-evident, but inferred by process of reasoning from certain self-evident truths. Were they self-evident, no one could ever be in ignorance of them. How then are they reasoned out? And in the first place, how does man by the light of reason come to know that God exists?

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The existence of God is borne in upon the mind by a four-fold consideration ; (1) the witness of the human race in all lands and in all ages ; (2) the evidences of design in the world around us ; (3) the need of a first cause to account for the origin of things ; (4) the need of a Supreme Lawgiver to account for the existence of the moral law of which conscience is the herald. I will touch briefly on these four proofs of God's existence. And first, there is the testimony of mankind. Never yet has a race or tribe of men been found on this earth, no matter how savage or degraded, but held in some form the belief in a Supreme Being. This belief is a rational conviction, rooted in the reason of man. It is only reason that could beget it, for none of the senses can perceive the being of a God. He is beyond the ken of the senses. This belief, moreover, bears about it all the tokens of truth. It is universal ; individuals there have been who professed to disbelieve in God, but a people, never. It is held not merely by the untutored and the unlettered ; on the contrary, the brightest intellects of all times, and the greatest philosophers have held

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it with the firmest grasp. Despite the efforts of individuals to uproot it from the minds of men, it has persisted and still persists. Error may live for a time, but sooner or later it is unmasked and hastens to hide itself in some corner. Truth alone is eternal; truth alone can bear the keen shafts of human reason and grow all the stronger, and shine all the brighter for the attempts made to beat it down and quench it. Finally this belief has wrought most potently for good. It has ever been the life and soul of morality, the prop and sure stay of every virtue which ennobles man. Without it no society could be secure, no law would have binding force in conscience, and brute force would reign in all the world. Suppose it to be erroneous, then is error the fountain source of untold blessings to the human race, and man owes homage to falsehood, not to truth.

Nor does it take away from the force of our argument that men have had false notions of the Deity, that pagans believe in a plurality of gods. This does but show that the light of reason, enfeebled and obscured since the fall,

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does not in all cases reveal clearly what the nature of God is, though it witnesses to His existence. Moreover, while the pagans of old worshipped many gods, one was ever supreme. Thus among the Greeks and Romans, Jove was king of gods and men ; and the greatest minds among them, such as Aristotle, Plato, and Cicero, held the belief in one only God, the First Cause and Prime Mover of all things.

This testimony of mankind at all times and in all places is what is known as the moral proof of the existence of God. It is a striking and impressive argument, but it is backed by other proofs that are still more cogent, because intrinsic and founded in the nature of things. Anyone who looks out into the world around him may trace in it the footprints of the Creator. On every hand there is order and harmony ; everywhere law reigns. But this order points to an Intelligence, a Mind which planned it ; this law implies a Lawgiver. Matter itself is wholly devoid of intelligence, is blind ; it cannot therefore be the cause of the order which we discern in it. It is passive, it does but obey the law ; it cannot therefore be the source of

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the law. What we call the laws of nature are such in the sense that nature is subject to them, is controlled by them; and because subject to them, because controlled by them, therefore not the source of them. The earth which turns daily on its axis, and revolves yearly around the sun, without swerving by a hair's breadth from its orbit, does but obey most faithfully yet blindly the law impressed on it by the hand of Him who guides the planets in their course.

Again, on every hand we find evidences of design in the formation of things. Everything serves a purpose; everything is adapted to some end. The sun sheds its light and warmth on the earth for the life of man and beast and all things that grow. The eye is made to see, and the ear to hear, and made with the most exquisite art. Whence this art but from some consummate Artist? And yet the material universe in which we trace this art is but as clay in the potter's hand. Whence this design, this adaptation of means to end, but from some intelligent Designer, some Mind that shaped things and fashioned them for a purpose? Every blade of grass that sprouts out

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of the earth, every leaf that unfolds itself upon the tree, every flower that blooms and sends forth its fragrance, points by its make and texture and finish to that great Artist who fashioned all things and furnished the one perfect pattern which human art can at the best but faintly copy.

This in barest outline is the argument from design. It comes home forcibly to all men who use their reason ; to the untutored savage as to the scholar and the sage. Thus Cicero observes : “ When you see a large and beautiful house it will never occur to you that it was built by mice or weasels, though you may not have seen the builder. With much less reason can you suppose that this magnificent world with all its manifold beauty in sky and sea and land, could have come into existence by chance.” And a rude Greenlander develops more fully this argument of the great orator, statesman, and philosopher of Pagan Rome. One of the Danish missionaries who went to preach the Gospel in Greenland in 1721, once asked one of the more intelligent of the converts how they could have lived without God for so many

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generations. “ We were indeed very ignorant,” replied the Greenlander, “ before you came to tell us of the goodness of God and of the Saviour of mankind. But we have often thought by ourselves how a kayak (a boat for one person) with what belongs to it does not grow by chance, but must be made by one skilled in building; and if one who does not know the art attempts to make it, he will spoil much and labor to no purpose. Now the snow-bird is a much finer piece of work than the best made kayak, yet no man could make the bird. And man himself is so much more than any animal. Who has made him? He has had parents, and they have had parents in their turn; but who made the first parents? Some say the first parents grew out of the earth. But how is it that none grow out of the earth any more? And the earth itself and the sea, and the sun, and the moon and stars, how came they into being? Some one must have made them who is more powerful and skilled and wiser than the wisest men. And he who did all this must also be very good, because all these things we see are so useful to us. So some of us often

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thought in our hearts before you came from far away to teach us to know the great God."

This great God who made all things, whom this rude Greenlander came to know in this way, we have known Him from childhood. We have known how wise and good He is, how good especially He has ever been to us ; how He has provided us with good things in season, with what was needful from day to day ; how He has given His only Son to be our Saviour ; how He sent Him into the world to become as one of ourselves and to lay down His very life for love of us. But what return have we ever made for all His goodness and all the love He has lavished upon us ? Is it possible that we have not loved Him ? Alas ! it is not only possible, it is a fact. With shame we have to confess that we have not only not loved Him, but have at times hardened our hearts against Him, turned our backs upon Him, broken His Holy commandments, mocked Him with an outward show of service and honor while all the time our souls within us were black with sin and rebellion against Him. And He, has He ceased to be good to us ? Has He treated us

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as we have so richly deserved ? “ Can a woman forget her infant so as not to have pity on the son of her womb ? ” He asks by the mouth of His prophet. “ And if she should forget, yet will not I forget thee.” Let us then read the wickedness and baseness of our sins in the clear light of God’s goodness and tenderness and mercy towards us, that we may repent of them, and learn to love this God of all goodness and serve Him henceforward in spirit and in truth.

SERMON FOURTH.

IV.

“I BELIEVE IN GOD.”

1. God the First cause of all things. No way of accounting for the origin of things that begin to be but to trace it to an uncaused cause.
2. Force of the argument from an uncaused cause realized more fully in a concrete case. Origin of life on earth. The idea of an infinite series of living organisms repugnant. Even granting the possibility of such a series, there must be admitted an uncaused cause of life outside the series. An objection met.
3. God's existence proved from the existence of the moral law.

Conclusion. Reason leads us to the threshold of the temple of faith, but no farther. The bond of brotherhood in Christ.

WE have seen how men at all times and in all places agree in witnessing to the existence of a Supreme Being.

Father of all ! in every age,
In every clime adored,
By saint, by savage, and by sage,
Jehovah, Jove, or Lord.

We have seen, too, how the laws whence comes the order and harmony which we see in

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the world around us point to the existence of a Mind which framed them and impressed them upon matter, and how everything in nature, from the greatest to the least, is so adapted to a purpose and wrought with such wondrous art that it reveals itself as the work of an Intelligent Being, powerful and wise and good.

There is yet another reason for affirming the existence of God, and that is the need of a first cause to account for the origin of things. There are many things in the world which begin to be, are for a season, and pass away, or cease to be. Manifestly such things have not in themselves the reason of their own existence. They receive existence when they begin to be from that which already exists, and if that, in its turn, derives its existence from something else, we are as far off as ever from any explanation of the origin of these things. Therefore we must come at last to some being which has within itself the reason of its own existence ; which is uncaused ; which does not begin to be, but always is, self-existent, and therefore necessary, eternal, and by its very nature not liable to the vicissitudes of time.

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In one word, we must go back to the eternal God if we would account for the origin of things that are transitory in their nature, the things that pass away.

We shall perhaps be the better able to grasp the full force of this argument if we take it in a concrete case. Two or three hundred years ago there was not a single one in existence of all the myriads of living creatures that now people the earth. I say two or three hundred years ago, although I might put it at less. We have many thousand years behind us, and can afford to be generous, to allow a large margin for longevity. Well, whence have these living creatures come? From other living creatures, and these in their turn from others. But this must stop somewhere; the process cannot go on forever; it cannot be carried to infinity. To suppose an infinite series of living beings, one taking its origin from the other, is to suppose a series in which there is no first; for if first there be, then, since there is a last, between the first and the last there can be but a finite number, however great. But if there is no first, there can be no second, no third, no

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last, which is contrary to fact. Since, therefore, there is a last link in the living chain, there must needs be a first, and the series must consequently be finite. Even if it could, by an impossible hypothesis, be carried to infinity, we should have an infinite series of living things each having an origin, and that origin by the very terms of the question outside the series.

But perhaps life sprang originally from that which was itself without life, spontaneously from mere matter. You remember that the Greenlander put this same objection to himself when dealing with the origin of the first human beings. Some say, he observed, that they grew out of the earth. And he answered it, “But how is it that none grow out of the earth any more?” This would silence the objector; it would not perhaps satisfy him. We can go much further. If anything is certain in the science of the day it is that life never comes save from that which lives. It is an axiom of science as firmly established as the law of gravitation that life can come only from life. And apart from every proof which science has fur-

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nished, it is plain to the reason of man that what has not life itself cannot give life, since nothing can give that which it has not. Now there was a time when no living creature existed on the earth. Geology proves that life on this earth had a beginning, and moreover, men of science now hold the theory that the whole earth was once a mass of fire in which no creature could by any possibility live. Since, then, there was a time when there was no living creature on the earth, and since life can come only from that which lives, it follows that the first thing that had life in it upon the earth was made by a Living Being who did not receive life but gave life, who is Life itself and the First Cause of all things that live.

There is yet another proof of God's existence. It is the existence of the moral law. There is such a thing as right and wrong in human conduct; some acts are morally bad, others morally good. This is implied in the laws of all nations; it is proclaimed in the language and literature of every people; it is attested by the conscience of every individual. Whence is this moral law? Whence is it that some acts

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are good and other acts are bad: that virtue is deserving of reward and vice of punishment? Is man himself the author of this law? Has man created the distinction between right and wrong? What man has made man can unmake, but no man can make that which is right to be other than right, or that which is wrong to be other than wrong. Besides, man himself is the subject of this law; man obeys it; man is not therefore the author of it. The law is within him whether he will or no. His conscience tells him that he ought to do what is right, and witnesses against him when he does what is wrong, even if no one knows of that wrong but himself. This law, then, which is a law unto all men, which is written, as it were, in the conscience, comes from one who is above man, who is man's Lord and Master, because He created man and has therefore a claim to man's obedience,—comes, in one word, from the Sovereign Lord and God of all things, the fount of justice, the King of kings and Lord of lords, through whom earthly kings hold sway and earthly princes dispense justice.

Thus reason itself makes us certain that

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there is a God. It also tells us with certainty that this God has revealed Himself to man in a supernatural way ; that he has given a revelation of truths above the order of nature. In divers ways He spoke by the prophets ; but we are now concerned only with the revelation that He made by the mouth of His Son, the Christian Revelation. The New Testament is beyond the shadow of doubt an authentic and genuine document. The evidence for this is overwhelming and I need not enter upon it here. Enough to say that no other record of past events is so sure as that of the gospel narrative. Now from the New Testament, looked upon as a trustworthy historical record, we learn that Christ the Son of the Virgin Mary claimed to be the Son of God, claimed to give a revelation from God to man, and made good the claim by working miracles such as no man could work, healing the sick, raising the dead to life, and arising Himself from the tomb on the third day after He was put to death by the Jews. We learn, too, that Christ founded a Church to teach the same truths which He first taught, to teach all nations these self-same

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truths until the end of time. Thus are we led by the light of reason and under its guidance step by step to the threshold of the temple of faith, to the gate of God's Kingdom on earth, to the door of the Church of the living God, to the organ and teacher of divine revelation, to the pillar and ground of the truth. And now reason has done its work, and faith begins and we hear the words of One who spoke with authority, for He was God, the words which were first spoken to a group of fishermen in a corner of Judea, but which have gone out into all the earth and come down through all the ages: "Go teach all nations, and lo! I am with you always even to the consummation of the world." This is the faith once delivered to the saints, the faith that has overcome the world, the faith that has peopled heaven with that great multitude which no man could number, of all nations, and tribes, and peoples, and tongues, who stand before the throne, and in the sight of the Lamb, clothed in white robes and with palms in their hands. And we are heirs of that faith, heirs by baptism of God's own Kingdom, knit together by the bond of

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Christian Brotherhood in the communion of saints. Let us follow in the footsteps of the saints, mindful, as they were ever mindful in the days of their pilgrimage, that on this earth we are exiles far from our true home ; that we have not here a lasting city, but seek one to come. And let us not forget those other exiles who are still shut out from the bright city of God above, who pine in their prison-house and stretch out suppliant hands to their friends in this life, to us who are bound to them by the tenderest of ties, craving our pity and our prayers and the suffrages of Holy Mother Church that the days of their exile may be shortened and that at length they may enter into the mansions of eternal rest.

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V.

GOD—HIS ESSENCE AND ATTRIBUTES.

1. The first article of the Creed. The fatherhood of God known by faith, not by reason.
2. God a spirit infinitely perfect. Matter, life, spirit. Man spiritual, but not a spirit. The angels bodiless spirits, but finite. The angels have life, but God is life itself.
3. The attributes of God. Not really distinct from one another, nor from God. God a simple being, eternal, immense, unchangeable.
4. The operative attributes of God, knowledge, will, and power.

Conclusion. The thought of God's omnipresence and almighty power should keep us from sin and help us to walk in the narrow way that leads to life.

“I BELIEVE in God the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth.” This is the first article of the Apostles’ Creed. Here at once we pass from the domain of reason to that of faith. Reason tells us that there is a God, the First Cause of all things, a supremely wise, su-

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premely good, and supremely just Being, the author of all that is wise and good and just. It does not, it cannot tell us, that there is a God the Father, a God the Son, and a God the Holy Ghost, and that these three are one, one in the unity of the Godhead, three in the trinity of distinct personality. It does not even tell us that this God is our Father; it is faith, not reason, that has taught us to know Him for our Father and invoke Him as such. By nature we are not children of God, we are but His creatures, made in His image and likeness it is true, yet in this no more than the work of His hands. It is by grace we are His children, by adoption through the merits of His only Son, and reason can only tell us what we are by nature, faith alone what we are by the free gift of God's grace.

This first article of the Creed sets before us an attribute of God, a phase as it were of the Deity, His omnipotence or almighty : God is the Almighty. But before speaking of this and the other attributes of God, I will speak of His being, of His nature, of what He is in Himself. If you ask the question : Who is God ?

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I may answer, God is the First Cause of all things; or, in the words of the Creed, God is the Creator of Heaven and Earth. This will tell you who God is, will mark Him off from all other beings, but will not tell you what He is. The question, What is God? calls for a different answer. The Catechism gives that answer, as clearly and as fully perhaps as it can be given in the language of men, when it tells us that God is a spirit, infinitely perfect. This means, to begin with, by way of negation, that He is not matter, nor anything material or corporeal. Spirit and matter are opposed as light and darkness: matter we see and taste and touch; spirit we cannot see nor taste nor touch nor perceive by any one of our senses. Spirit is active; matter of itself is inert, passive. Yet in matter there is motion, and among material beings we see certain things which have self-motion, which move themselves. These we call living beings and the mysterious thing which enables them to move themselves we call life. Now there are various kinds of living beings; there are various grades of life. The lowest is that of the plant, which merely grows; next

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comes the animal, which grows and feels ; and last of all man, who not only grows and feels, but thinks and wills. This is the highest kind of life, the life that thinks and wills. To this kind of life we give the name of spirit, and we say that man has a spiritual soul, because he thinks and wills.

Man, then, has a spiritual soul, but he is not a spirit, for man is made up of a body and soul, and a spirit has no body. When we conceive therefore, of the soul without the body, of that active, subtle power within us which thinks and wills, we get some idea of what God is. God is life, pure life, life of the highest, most perfect kind, intelligence, a bodiless spirit. But the angels, too, are bodiless spirits, and to distinguish God from the angels we say that God is a spirit infinitely perfect. The angels have life ; God is life itself. The angels receive life, as do all things that live, from God. But God does not receive life ; He is the uncaused cause of life. And forasmuch as He is uncaused, forasmuch as He does not receive life or being from another, but by His very nature is and lives, He has being and life, not in a

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certain measure and degree, but without measure or degree, in short He has the fulness of being; His being is without limit; and every perfection which belongs to being, and which exists in a certain measure or degree in created beings, is in Him without limit. He is then a spirit, infinitely perfect. The perfections of God we call His attributes. They are not distinct one from another, nor from God Himself, although we conceive of them as distinct in our effort after something like an adequate idea of Him. We speak of Him as good and wise and all the rest, but, strictly speaking, we should say that He is goodness itself and wisdom itself, and because He is goodness and wisdom, therefore goodness in Him is not really distinct from wisdom, nor is His goodness or wisdom really distinct from Himself.

It follows that God is a most simple being, eternal, immense, and unchangeable. These are some of the attributes of God. He is a simple being, not only because not being material, He has no parts as a body has; but because there is no distinction between one attribute and another, or between any attribute and

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His essence or nature. He is a pure spirit without a body ; and if the Scripture sometimes speaks of the arm of God or the right hand of God, it does but condescend to our weakness, since we are unable to conceive of God but after a human fashion, or to speak of Him but in terms of things that we are familiar with. The arm of God is the power of God, and the right hand of God is as it were the place of honor, as when we say that Christ sits at the right hand of the Father.

It follows that God is eternal, follows, that is, from His being the First Cause, Himself uncaused. He did not begin to be, but always is. In Him is no past or future, but a never-ending present. In time there is a succession of events, one going before, the other following ; there is a coming and a going and a passing away. In God there is none of these, for He does not begin to be, nor begin to cease to be, nor pass away, but always is. In the life of man as in the life of every creature, there is succession and ceaseless change. Man is born, he grows, he withers away and dies. He has but a spark of life. But God is life and the

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fountain of life, and in Him is no vicissitude, nor the shadow of a change. He is unchangeable : “ I am the Lord,” He tells us, “ and change not.” In His relation to us He may seem to change, as when we say that He begins to be angry with men for their sins. But the change is in us, not in God. To us the sun seems to move round the earth, but in reality the sun does not change its place, it is the earth that moves.

And as God is beyond the bourne of time and change, so He is beyond the limits of space. He is not confined to any one place, but is everywhere, and if He were to create other worlds, He would be there without ceasing to be here. “ If I take the wings of the morning,” says the Psalmist, “ and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me.” This is the immensity of God, which means that He is not circumscribed by any limits of space but is in all things and in all places, and capable of being in other worlds, did other worlds exist. He is everywhere present. “ In Him we live and move and are,” and this we

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call ubiquity or omnipresence. But though He is everywhere present, He is not diffused through space, for He is not material or made up of parts, but one and undivided everywhere. He is said, too, to be specially present in some places, not that He is more completely present in one place than in another, for He is wholly present everywhere, but because He shows forth His power or reveals Himself more fully in one place than in another. Thus He is said to be specially present where a miracle is wrought, and men say the finger of God is there, and again in heaven where He manifests Himself to the blessed.

These attributes of God, His infinity, simplicity, eternity, immutability, immensity, are spoken of as quiescent, because they are bound up as it were with the being of God and have no direct bearing on God's action or operation. Those that have such bearing are called operative, and are three in number, knowledge, will, and power. Before a man does any work he first of all takes thought as to whether it is possible and how it is to be done. Take the case of an architect. First of all he has plans

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in his mind of the various kinds of buildings that are possible according to the different styles of architecture and the different uses to which they are put. Then he chooses one of these plans, draws it out, and sets to work to put up the building after that plan. Now God is the architect of the universe, and the universe, and every being in the universe is a work of divine art. In God, then, there is knowledge. He knew from eternity the things He was going to create. And because He is infinite, His knowledge also is infinite. Hence in the Divine mind there are ideals or patterns of an infinity of things, and out of this infinity of possible things He chose this universe and the things that are in it, and willed that they, rather than others should exist. Hence in God there is will, and free-will or freedom of choice, which is plain also from the fact that man has free-will, for this perfection must be in God the creator of man. Finally, in God there is power, for He created things, and this implies power of the highest kind. God's power is infinite, as is God Himself. He is omnipotent, all things are possible to Him, and nothing is

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difficult to Him. He is the creator of heaven and earth, which means that by the exercise of His almighty power He made all things in heaven and earth out of nothing. He willed and things were ; He said, Be creatures made, and all creatures forthwith sprang into being.

What a thought is this of the almighty power of God and His omnipresence to keep us from sin and to hearten us in the practice of virtue. If we sin we do so in the very sight of God : His all-seeing eye is upon us : He notes each act, even the most secret thought of the heart. Our sin we cannot hide from Him, nor can we escape the punishment which is its due, for He against whom we sin is the Almighty One. If, on the other hand, we resist sin and keep our feet in the path of His commandments, we have the consciousness that our Heavenly Father is watching our struggles, that He knows our weakness and is ever ready to help us over the hard places of the road till we reach the end of life's journey and enter into our eternal home.

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VI.

THE DIVINE ATTRIBUTES.

1. The moral attributes of God. The wisdom of God and the wisdom of this world.
2. Divine truth and divine justice. The justice of God not to be measured by our sense of what is just.
3. The mercy of God. A touching picture of it in parables.
4. The providence of God. Life's trials and the purpose they serve.

Conclusion. The burden of the Church's preaching : "Let us walk honestly as in the day."

GOD, as we have seen, is a spirit infinitely perfect. He is life itself, life of the highest kind, that is pure intelligence, life without beginning and without end, eternal life, unchanging and unchangeable, yesterday, to-day, and the same forever. He is one and simple in Himself, and His attributes or perfections are not really distinct one from another nor from Himself. We say of a man that he is good, we cannot say that he is goodness, for

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the attribute is not the man. But God and His attribute are one and the same; God is goodness. I have spoken of some of His attributes, His simplicity, infinity, immensity, unchangeableness, eternity; His will, and knowledge, and power. There are yet others which are called moral, because they correspond to certain qualities in man which we speak of as moral virtues. We call a man wise who orders all things rightly, who knows the right end of human endeavor and chooses the right means to obtain this end. The wisdom of God is shown in this, that He always works for ends worthy of Himself, and uses suitable means for attaining these ends. All of God's ways are wise ways, though they may not seem so to men. "O the depth of the riches both of the knowledge and the wisdom of God! How incomprehensible are His judgments, and unsearchable His ways!" Behold the Son of God come to found His Kingdom in this world. He is born in a stable, He lives in lowliness and poverty, He dies upon a cross. Is this wisdom? The worldly wise shake their heads, and call it folly. But the folly of the cross

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proves to be the highest wisdom in the event. The Son of God chooses twelve poor and unlettered fishermen and sends them to establish His Kingdom in all nations. Was this a wise choice? Were these fit instruments to compass so mighty a work? To the worldly wise again it would certainly seem not. Yet here again the wisdom of the wise is confounded. These poor and unlettered fishermen achieved their wonderful work in the teeth of all the opposition that worldly wisdom, backed by unlimited wealth and power, could organize against them. And their work still endures, while the institutions devised by the wisdom of this world disappear, one after another, leaving but a memory behind. The world still counts the cross a folly, but to us who believe in Him who died upon it, it is the wisdom of God and the power of God, who chooses the foolish things of this world to confound the wise, and the weak things of this world to confound the mighty.

The other moral attributes are the truth, the justice, the mercy, and the providence of God. God is the sovereign truth in Himself

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and He is the sovereign truth in His dealings with men. “Heaven and earth shall pass away but My words shall not pass away.” He can neither deceive nor be deceived. His unerring word is the firm basis of our faith, and our hope rests on His fidelity to His promises.

The justice of God lies in this, that He renders to every man according to his works. For this is justice that each should get his due. Like His wisdom His justice is an abyss that we cannot fathom. He tells us Himself that He visits the sins of parents upon their children to the third and fourth generation. He has made all men suffer in this life for the fault of one. We may not be able to see the justice of this ; yet we cannot doubt that it is just. God’s ways are not our ways, nor are His judgments like our judgments nor is His justice to be judged and measured by our feeble sense of what is right. We believe and know that He is just, and that all His judgments are just, and with this we must be content, until the divine justice be made manifest to all on the last day.

Viewed by itself divine justice is an awful

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attribute. But it is tempered by the divine mercy, and well for us that it is, for “in the course of justice none of us should see salvation.” The mercy of God has its root in His goodness, in His love for the creature He has made in His own image and likeness. “Can a woman,” He asks us Himself by the mouth of His prophet, “Can a woman forget her infant so as not to have pity on the child of her womb? And if she should forget, yet will not I forget thee.” The mercy of God which is over all His works is shown in His tender pity for those who have strayed into the byways of sin. How touching is the picture that our Lord presents to us of the Divine Mercy, the Divine Pity, in that parable of the Good Shepherd who leaves the ninety-nine sheep there in the desert, and goes in search of the one that was lost. And when he finds it, places it on his shoulders and bears it back tenderly to the fold. Or again, in the parable of the prodigal son. But woe to those who despise the mercy of God and His patience, who heed not the Father’s voice when it calls them to repentance, for they shall find no mercy. And woe to those who show not

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mercy to others, for justice without mercy to him who sheweth not mercy.

The providence of God is His wisdom and goodness in the government of the world. It is the foresight that He has of the needs of His creatures and the care that He takes to supply these needs. The providence of God is over all His works. It reacheth from end to end mightily and disposeth all things sweetly. All things both great and small God has created, and all things that He created He cares for. He feeds the birds of the air and clothes the lilies of the field. And with a special providence He watches over man. Man He made for a higher than an earthly end, and His constant aim is to lead man to the end for which He made him. Hence He never ceases to put us in mind of our high calling, lest amid our anxieties about temporal things we lose sight of the things that are eternal. The trials and the crosses that we meet with in life are meant to arouse us from the torpor of worldliness ; the death of some near and dear one is a pointed warning that we must hold ourselves in readiness to follow in our turn. And the voice of

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God's Church speaks to us yet more clearly in the same sense. "We have not here a lasting city ;" such is the burden of her preaching since the days of St. Paul. "Brethren," she keeps repeating in the words of the same Apostle, and her voice is as a trumpet call to arouse those that are sleeping the sleep of death in their sins, "Brethren know that it is now the hour for us to rise from sleep. The night is passed and the day is at hand. Let us, therefore, cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light ; let us walk honestly as in the day ; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and impurities, not in envy and contention ; but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ." Is there one amongst us that is guilty of fraud or any form of dishonesty in his dealings with his neighbors ? Let him put away from him that work of darkness, and walk honestly as in the day. Is there one who is given to quarrelling or lives in enmity with his fellow man ? Let him cease from envy and contention and make his peace with God and man. Is there one that is impure in thought or word or deed ; who has eaten the bread of angels but still seeks to sate

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his soul with the husks of swine, as did the prodigal of old ? Let him in the name of that God who loves the clean of heart and rewards them with the vision of His face in glory ; who loathes and abhors impurity and punishes it with hell-fire ; let him cast off from him all uncleanness and return to the house of his Father that he may be cleansed from his sins and clothed once more in the bright robe of chastity, which is the armor of light. Is there one that is a drunkard or in the way of becoming a drunkard ? Let him remember that drunkards shall not possess the kingdom of God. Is there one that makes it his business to supply others with the means of getting drunk ? Let him consider whether, when sentence of condemnation is passed upon the drunkard, he may not have to answer for it before the judgment-seat of Christ.

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VII.

“HE WAS BORN OF THE VIRGIN MARY.”

1. All that the Church teaches respecting the Virgin Mary, her sinless conception, her sinless life, her virginity, and the power of her intercession, contained as in a germ in those words of the Creed, “He was born of the Virgin Mary.”
2. Conclusion.—Let us always have recourse to this “Mother of mercy, our life, our sweetness, and our hope.”

IN the third article of the Apostles' Creed we are told that the Only Begotten Son of God was conceived by the Holy Ghost and born of the Virgin Mary. Herein is implied a twofold mystery, the mystery of the ever blessed Trinity and the mystery of the Incarnation. Each is to be treated of in its turn, but to-day it seems fitting that we should take up what the Creed says of her whose festival we celebrate. It is all told in one short sentence :

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God the Son was born of the Virgin Mary. The sentence is short but like the Creed, of which it is a part, it contains a great deal. It contains as in a germ all that the Church teaches respecting our blessed Lady: her sinless conception, her sinless life, her perpetual virginity, and the efficacy of her intercession at the heavenly court. All the privileges, all the gifts of grace that were showered upon Mary are but the natural sequel of that sovereign privilege and supreme gift of grace whereby she bore in her womb and gave birth to the Son of God. They have the whole reason of their being in the divine maternity. And first, her immaculate conception. This means, as you are aware, that Mary was conceived without the stain of original sin, and thus became, as the Protestant poet Wordsworth has it “our tainted nature’s solitary boast.” It means that from the very first moment of her existence as a human being, at the very moment when the virginal soul was being united with the virginal body, grace outstripped and was beforehand with sin. This highly favored child was kept free from the stain which every other child of

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Adam bears even in the mother's womb. Now this exceptional privilege was due to her who was to be the Mother of the Sinless One. In His conception the Son of Mary was sinless by nature, for He is God. It was becoming, it was congruous that in her conception Mary should be sinless by grace, for she was to be the Mother of God. Aye, the Mother of God. We do not shrink from calling her what she became and was by the power of the Holy Ghost. For she is the mother of Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ is true God and true man, yet so that the God Christ and the Man Christ are not two but one, one only Divine Person having two natures, the divine and the human. It was fitting then that the Mother of the All-Holy One should herself be holy from the very first moment of her existence ; it was to be expected that the Mother of the Redeemer should herself be redeemed in the most perfect way.

And as her conception, so her life. A sinless life was but the fitting sequel of a sinless conception :

“ Mother, whose virgin bosom was uncrossed
By the least shade of thought to sin allied,”

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In her was none of that proneness to evil which is in every other child of Adam. Original sin has inflicted upon our nature a three-fold wound. It has darkened the understanding, weakened the will, and left in us a strong tendency to evil. Prevent the cause and you prevent the effect. This is what the grace of God did in the case of her who is blessed among women. It was beforehand with original sin ; it forestalled the cause of these evils, and so forestalled the evils themselves. Hence there was no darkness in that virginal mind, no weakness in her nature. All this was purely God's gift. But Mary's personal sinlessness throughout her life was in part the gift of God and in part the fruit of her own co-operation with God's grace. She kept her soul unsullied, she sinned not ; yet this was not because she could not, but because she would not sin. And as she was ever pure and sinless, so was she ever a virgin. "Behold a virgin shall conceive and bring forth a Son." And this Son, no other than the Son of the Most High, was, as the Creed tells us, born of the Virgin Mary. She thus became a

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mother, nor ceased to be a virgin, and this again because she was the mother, not of man, but of a God made man ; because He whom she bore was above nature, and was therefore conceived and brought forth into the world in a supernatural way.

Thus all the special gifts of our Blessed Lady are traceable to her exalted privilege as Mother of the world's Saviour. To this, too, is due the efficacy of her intercession. In proportion to her dignity, in proportion to her nearness to God, is the power of her intercession. That dignity is the highest possible to a mere creature. Nor can creature be so near to God or so dear to God as the stainless Virgin who was found worthy to be the Mother of His only Son. What ties so close or so tender as those which bind a mother to her child ? Therefore is the power of Mary's prayer supremely great because she is supremely exalted, because she is raised above the angels and the saints, Queen of the Heavenly Kingdom and Mother of Heaven's Eternal King. When Queen Esther presented herself before king Assuerus, as we read in the *Book of Esther*, the king asked

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her, “What is thy request?” She replied: “O king, give me the lives of my people, for whom I implore thy mercy.” The king at once complied, and forthwith revoked the sentence of death that he had passed upon the Jews. If this earthly king, for love of Esther, granted her the salvation of her people, how much more will our heavenly King grant to the prayer of the most loving of mothers and the noblest of queens, the salvation of those who fly to her for protection. Justly then do we style her the “Refuge of sinners,” and with well assured confidence do we call upon this “Mother of mercy, our life, our sweetness, and our hope.” The more deeply we have sinned the greater is our need of her mediation with Him who owns her for His Mother, with Him who is, indeed, our Saviour but at the same time our Judge. “Let him who despairs,” says St. Bernard, “hope in thee.” So tender is the heart of this Mother of mercy that she is ever ready to plead the cause even of the most abandoned sinner if only he have a sincere purpose of amendment; so great is the power of her pleading that no one has ever had recourse

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to her in vain. In her is nothing to overawe us ; no one need fear to approach her ; though next to God Himself, she is still but a creature, "with," as Cardinal Newman has it, "a creature's comeliness and lustre suited to our state." And now, to close with the words of that same Cardinal, "thy very face and form, dear Mother, speak to us of the eternal. Not like earthly beauty, dangerous to look upon ; but like the morning star which is thy emblem, bright and musical, breathing purity, telling of heaven and infusing peace. O harbinger of day ! O hope of the pilgrim ! lead us still as thou hast led ; in the dark night, across the bleak wilderness guide us on to our Lord Jesus, guide us home."

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VIII.

THE TRINITY.

1. The mystery of mysteries, ineffable and unfathomable.
A trinity in unity.
2. Traces of the Trinity (a) in nature, (b) in man. Mind, idea, love.
3. Mystery of the Trinity not an article of faith under the Old Law.

Conclusion.—This mystery the basis of our faith and hope.
Our duty as Christians.

WE read in the life of St. Augustine that as he was one day deep in thought on the blessed Trinity, he saw himself in spirit standing on the shore of a vast ocean, and gazing into its mysterious depths. All at once his eye fell on a little child which was amusing itself by making a hole in the sand and pouring into it from a shell the water of the sea. On being asked the reason the child said that it was going to empty the sea into that little hole. “But how can that be?” queried the saint

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“It is as easy for me to do this,” answered the child, “as for you to fathom the mystery of the Trinity. As well can this little hole contain the ocean, as the mind of man take in the great mysteries of God.”

The doctrine of the Trinity is a truth of faith that passes human understanding. It is in the strictest sense of the word a mystery. It is above reason, not only in the sense that reason unaided could never have come to the knowledge of it, but also in the sense that reason is unable to understand or explain it even after it has become known through revelation. The mystery lies in this, that whereas there are three Divine Persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, there is but one God. The Father is God, the Son is God, the Holy Ghost is God, yet there are not three Gods but one God. The reason is in the unity of the divine nature. Three human persons are three men, because while they have the same kind of nature, that is, human, the nature of one is numerically distinct from that of the others. But in the Trinity, the nature of the Father is numerically one and the same with the nature of the

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Son, and the nature of the Father and the Son is in like manner one and the same with that of the Holy Ghost. There is unity of nature, but trinity of persons. How this can be, we do not and cannot understand. Nor is it strange that we cannot, for our understanding is finite, and there are many things even in the world around us which we know to be and yet cannot explain.

There is nothing in the created universe, nothing has ever come within the range of our experience, which will serve to throw any real light on this ineffable mystery. Creatures are indeed fashioned after the likeness of God, but any and every created likeness must fall infinitely short of representing God as He is in Himself. Still there are vestiges or traces of the Trinity in creatures, faint resemblances in which the mystery is dimly shadowed forth. We find these especially in the higher and nobler creatures, for the higher, the more perfect the creature, the likest is it to the Creator. Thus the sun which is placed in the firmament of heaven and rules, as it were, this nether world, is in some sort an image of the Trinity.

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It gives forth light and heat, and is itself one with these, since from it they proceed as from their source. The light is an emblem of the Son of God, who is the light of the World, and the warmth an emblem of the Holy Spirit, who is the living Love of the Father and the Son.

Again in man, who is the noblest creature in this material world, and who is said in Holy Writ to have been created in the image and likeness of God, we find a still more striking type of the Trinity. Man forms in his mind an idea of goodness, and out of the idea thus formed springs the love of goodness. Mind, idea, love, these three represent the three Persons of the Blessed Trinity. God is Goodness, God is Intelligence, God is Love, and He is from eternity. From all eternity, then, God the Father begets the Son, that is to say, being pure intelligence, He forms an idea of Himself that is at once perfect and adequate, and because perfect and adequate, therefore infinite and equal to Himself in all things. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” St. John

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thus speaks of the Son of God as the Word or Idea of the Father, conceived, that is, begotten in the beginning, that is from eternity. From all eternity, too, Love springs from the perception which the Father has of His own goodness in and through the Idea or Word in which it is mirrored forth. And thus the Holy Ghost, who is infinite Love, springs or proceeds from the Father and the Son, for goodness does not awaken love unless it be perceived, and the goodness of God is perceived in and through the Divine Idea or Word, that is the Son. But the goodness of which the Father is the source, the Son the Idea, the Holy Ghost the Love, is not, as in the case of man, something external, but is the very being and essence of God, who is goodness itself. And therefore the three though distinct are one God, having the same being, the same essence, the same goodness.

In the Old Law under the Jewish dispensation, the mystery of the Trinity was not an article of faith. In many places of the Old Testament the doctrine is more or less obscurely hinted at, but nowhere is it clearly set forth.

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It would seem, however, that the doctrine of the Trinity in the Godhead was part of the revelation made to our first parents, for in no other way can we account for the distinct traces of a belief in the doctrine which are to be found in the language and customs of pagan peoples such as the Egyptians, the Greeks, the Hindu, and the Chinese. It was reserved, however, for the Son of God, who came to teach mankind the way of salvation, to give the full revelation of this mystery, making it the groundwork of His religion. For He declared Himself to be the Son of God, and gave testimony of the Spirit of truth whom He was to send into the world, and ordered the sacrament which was to make of men Christians, children of God, and heirs of His Kingdom, to be given in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.

Let us then bow our minds before this great mystery, and offer it the homage of our understanding as to a truth too great to be fully grasped and too deep to be fathomed by such as we. If to the mind of man there were no mystery in God, God would not be the Almighty

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and Infinite Being that He is, infinite in goodness, infinite in mercy, infinite in pity and condescension towards us His sinful creatures. Let us rejoice then to believe Him to be such as He has revealed Himself to be, one, almighty, infinite, and eternal God in three Divine Persons. Much cause, in truth, have we to rejoice, for this mystery of the ever-blessed Trinity is the foundation of all our hopes of happiness hereafter. By reason of this mystery it was that a Divine Person, distinct from the Father yet equal to Him in all things, was able to offer in the human nature He took upon Himself the sacrifice of His own life in satisfaction for our sins.

We hear in the gospel the voice of one who went before this Divine Saviour of men, the voice of one crying in the wilderness, “ Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight His paths.” God grant that we may straighten all that is crooked in our lives ; that we may put away our sins ; that we may live as becomes Christians, not in rioting, or drunkenness, or lust, but in meekness, and sobriety, and purity, and in the fear of the Lord.

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IX.

THE INCARNATION.

1. Though the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost are but one God, and united in all their works, yet a special work is attributed to each of these three Divine Persons. To the Son is appropriated the work of redemption, and fittingly so.
2. The Son of God became man to repair the ruins of the fall. His coming into the world wisely delayed. Significance of His Name.
3. Jesus Christ is true God and true Man in one Person. That He is true God is a truth of revelation, that He is true man is a fact of history.

Conclusion.—Let us offer Him as did the Magi of old, gifts—loving homage, prayerful hearts, mortified lives.

THE three Persons of the Blessed Trinity, having but one and the same divine nature, are united in all their works. What the Father does that the Son does, and that the Holy Ghost does also. But because of the distinction of Persons, and the relations that spring from this distinction a certain work is appropriated to each of the three Divine Persons

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as peculiarly the work of that Person. Thus creation is appropriated to the Father. Hence in the Creed we say : “ I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth.” For the Father is the first Person of the Trinity, the source, as it were, of the other two Persons, and there is therefore a special fitness in ascribing to Him the work of creation as to the principal source of all being and of all things. Again, the work of redemption is appropriated to the Son, as well because it was His personal work, as because there was a special fitness in His being sent to accomplish that work. For the Son of God is, as we have seen, the Idea of God, in the likeness of which all things were made, and more especially man. Now the work of redemption was a work of restoration, a work which was meant to repair the ruins wrought by sin in our nature. And as an architect restores a building that has fallen into ruin on the same plan which he used in first setting it up, so it was fitting that the Father should send the Son to repair the nature of man and restore in him the divine likeness which had been defaced by sin. In like manner the work of

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sanctification is appropriated to the Holy Ghost, as being His personal work and as being His by a title of special fitness. For to sanctify is not only to cleanse from sin but also to unite man to God by the bond of love. And as the Holy Ghost is the bond of love between the Father and the Son, He is thus fittingly the author of that charity, that bond of love, which unites man with God.

But it is with the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity that we have now to do, Him who was born of the Virgin Mary. "And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, Our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Ghost and born of the Virgin Mary." He is thus God and man, one only Son, born of the Father before all ages, born of the Virgin in the fulness of time, that is to say, when the time fixed by the divine decree and foretold by the prophets was fulfilled. This was many thousand years after the fall.

As the purpose of His coming was to restore our fallen nature—"for us men and for our salvation, He came down from heaven"—it may be asked why He did not come sooner.

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The world was grown old in sin, and yet He who was to take away the sin of the world delayed His coming. But in the meantime men were saved by faith in the Redeemer to come, and the delay really worked and was meant to work good to the human race. Man had fallen through pride, and it was needful for man to be made humble, needful for man to gain from long and sore experience a sense of his own weakness, needful for him to learn the weakness of his understanding and the weakness of his will. Left to himself for many hundreds of years after the fall, man at length all but lost his hold of the great truths of the moral order, and groped his way as one in the dark. Then God gave him a law of right conduct graven on tables of stone. The mind was enlightened, but the will was weak. Then went up to God from men, conscious of their weakness, the plaintive cry that the heavens should drop dew and the clouds rain down the Just One, that the earth should open and bud forth the Saviour.

After many hundred years more of eager longing for the Expected of the nations and the

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Desire of the eternal hills, there was heard at dead of night on the plains of Bethlehem the sound of angel voices conveying the glad tidings of joy to many peoples that Christ the Saviour was born. He was called Jesus, this wondrous Child, for He should save the people from their sins. And this is the proper name of Him who was born of the Virgin, Jesus, which signifies Saviour—His proper and distinctive name, not as God the Second Person of the Trinity, Son of the Eternal Father, but as God and Man in one person, and Son of the Virgin Mary. Christ, His other name, signifies the Anointed; for it was the custom in the olden time to anoint with oil prophet, priest, and king. So Eliseus was by Elias anointed to be prophet in his own place; so Aaron was anointed and consecrated high-priest by Moses; so David was anointed king in the midst of his brethren by the prophet Samuel. And with this triple unction was Christ the Anointed of the Lord. Prophet He was, and Teacher of the prophets; King by right divine, and King of kings; Priest, too, and Priest forever according to the order of Melchisedech.

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We believe, then, of this Child that is born to us, this Son that is given to us, that He is at once true God and true Man, having two natures, the divine and the human, and yet being but one Person. This is the mystery of the Incarnation. That Christ, the Son of the Virgin Mary, is true God is foretold in the Old Testament and is shown in almost every page of the New. The Word was with God, and the Word was God, says St. John, and the Word was made flesh, and dwelt amongst us. And this Word made flesh says of Himself : “I and the Father are one ;” “He who seeth Me seeth the Father also.” Simon Peter openly confesses His Divinity saying : “Thou art Christ the Son of the living God ;” and is told that flesh and blood hath not revealed it to him, but the Father who is in heaven.

That Christ is true man is not so much a matter of faith as a historic fact. He was born in Bethlehem, lived and grew to manhood in Nazareth, went about preaching His gospel for three years in all the land of Judea, and at length paid the debt of our common nature between two malefactors on a cross.

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That Christ is God and Man in one Person, and that Divine, is a truth of faith, nay the very corner-stone of the whole system of Christian doctrine. The denial of it is the heresy of Nestorius, condemned in the early ages of the Church by the Council of Chalcedon. Christ says of Himself: “I and the Father are one;” and again: “The Father is greater than I.” As God He is one with the Father and equal to the Father; as Man, He is less than the Father. But it is the same person for which the pronoun “I” stands in both cases. St. Peter tells us that the Jews put to death the Author of life. Now it was the Man Christ, He who was born of the Virgin Mary, that died upon the Cross. Therefore He who was born of the Virgin Mary and died on the Cross is one and the same person with Him whom St. Peter calls the Author of life, that is God. Consequently Christ is God and Man in one Person, and that Person Divine. Nor could He by shedding His blood have made atonement for the sins of the world, had He not been God and Man in one Person, had not that blood been in very truth the blood of the Son of

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God, and thus of priceless value and infinite worth.

Let us, then, like the Magi of old, our first fathers in the faith, the first fruits of the Gentile world, humbly lay our offerings at the feet of the Infant Saviour, the gold of loving loyalty to our heavenly King and Lord ; the incense of our prayer and worship to the only Begotten of the Father, the Son of the Most High God ; the myrrh of mortification and self-denial to the Man Christ Jesus, the Son of the Virgin of Nazareth, who was meek and humble of heart, who when He was rich became poor for our sakes, suffered for us, blotting out with His own blood the handwriting of the decree that was against us, fastening it to the cross.

X.

THE INCARNATION.

1. The Christological section of the Creed : a compendious sketch of the life of Our Lord.
2. The place chosen by God for the birthplace of His Son. Christ reveals Himself to little ones. The poor and the lowly are the chosen ones of God.
3. Two incidents in the life of the Christ-Child ; what lessons we are to gather from them.

Conclusion.—Let us seek the one good in whom are all good things.

In the words of that majestic Creed of the Catholic Church which the priest recites Sunday after Sunday in the Holy Mass, the Creed set forth by the Council of Nice and confirmed by that of Constantinople, we profess our belief “in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages ; God of God, Light of Light, true God of true God, begotten not made ; of the same substance with the Father by Whom all things were made.

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Who for us men and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and became incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made Man. He was crucified also for us, suffered under Pontius Pilate, and was buried. And the third day He arose again, according to the Scriptures, and ascended into Heaven ; sitteth at the hand of the Father, and is to come again with glory to judge the living and the dead ; of whose Kingdom there shall be no end.” These words tell us in brief who Christ is and whence He came ; they tell us of His birth and his life upon earth, His death and burial, His resurrection and final triumph as judge of the quick and the dead, and as Sovereign Lord forever in the Kingdom of His Father.

Of His life in that glorious Kingdom we know but this that He reigns there as King and will reign for ever and ever. The things of that Kingdom eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor have they entered into the heart of man. We see them as in a glass darkly. But of His life on earth, of what He did and suffered for us here below, we know a great deal, and what we know we cannot too often dwell upon and

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ponder, for He is the great Model on Whom our lives must be moulded—the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

Born in Bethlehem of Juda, in a stable, between two animals of the stall, as tradition has it, He preached poverty and humility by example before His lips had yet learned the accents of human speech. “And thou Bethlehem land of Juda art not the least among the princes of Juda, for out of thee shall come a captain who shall rule my people Israel.” Bethlehem was chosen of God to be the birthplace of His Son, and the name of that chosen city is not a little significant, for it means in the Hebrew tongue, the House of Bread. Truly the House of Bread, of that Living Bread which came down from Heaven. For He who was born there tells us Himself, “The bread that I will give them is My flesh for the life of the world: not as your fathers did eat manna in the desert, and are dead; he who eats of this bread shall live forever.”

In the plain near Bethlehem on the night of the Saviour’s birth, there were shepherds keeping the night watches over their flock. We

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are told that the brightness of God shone round about them on that blessed night, and angel voices gave them tidings of what had come to pass in the city of David. “And they went over in haste, and found Mary and Joseph, and the Infant lying in the manger.” Thus did the Son of God reveal Himself first of all to these simple shepherd folk, poor and rude and unlettered persons, whom the great ones of this world held of less account than the very beasts they tended in the fields. How far we are all of us from that simplicity of life which is so dear to the heart of our Blessed Lord! And how hard it is for us to get ourselves practically to believe—it is easy enough in theory—but practically to believe that the poor and lowly ones of this earth, with their uncouth ways and their unpolished speech, stand, as a class, higher in the eyes of God and are dearer to Him than the wealthy and refined whom the world calls respectable and well-bred. Yet so it is; and the reason of it is that God loves simplicity and truth. The poor and lowly are the unspoilt children of nature, while the gloss of worldly refinement often covers much of vanity and

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pride and insincerity and worldly ambition, all of which are hateful to God.

Once when the Apostles were debating among themselves which of them should be greater in God's Kingdom, our Lord brought a little child and placing him in the midst of them said : “Amen, I say to you, unless you become as this little one you shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.” This, then, is the first lesson which the Infant Saviour teaches us—that patient poverty is better than riches ; that outward polish and refinement of manners, however pleasing in itself, counts for little if the heart be not humble and the mind sincere ; and that we are not to look down upon the poor and the lowly, for “hath not God chosen the poor in this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the Kingdom which He hath promised to them that love Him ?”

There are several incidents in the infancy and childhood of our Blessed Lord recorded in the Gospel, which point a lesson for us. I will touch on two of them. When the Wise Men had gone back to their country by another way, as the Gospel tells us, the tyrant Herod sought

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the Child, the new-born King, that he might put Him to death. An Angel of the Lord appeared in sleep to Joseph, and bade him rise and take the Child and His Mother and fly with them into Egypt. It was a long and weary way across the desert and into a strange land where dwelt a heathen people, but they set out at once. An old legend has it that on their journey they fell among robbers, but that the captain of the band, moved by he knew not what in the look and mien of that Virgin Mother and her Child, left them free to follow their journey. This chief of robbers it was, the same legend tells us, who afterward hung upon a cross by the side of Christ on Calvary, and heard from the lips of the Saviour, "This day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise."

The flight into Egypt teaches us that we are not to look for miracles so long as there are natural means of attaining our ends ; and that God's help is conditioned on our doing, on our part, what in us lies. We can count on God's grace in our battle with sin only if we do this. Are we sometimes overcome in this battle ? Do we even fall over and over again ? Depend

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upon it, it is because, and solely because we have been laggards in the fight. It is we who are wanting ; it certainly is not the grace of God. Either we have trusted too much in our own strength or not enough in the strength of Him in whom we can do all things ; or we have failed to use the means needful, such as prayer and the sacraments ; or we have wantonly put ourselves in the way of temptation, not shunning the occasions of sin. We have not been thoroughly in earnest. And the reason ever is that we set too little store by the grace of God, nor realize what a dreadful thing it is to incur His anger and run the risk of losing our souls.

Let us take a lesson from another incident in the childhood of Jesus. When He was twelve years, He went with Mary and Joseph, as was yearly their wont, up to Jerusalem, on the solemn day of the pasch. At the end of their first day's journey, on their way back from Jerusalem to Nazareth, the Divine Child was nowhere to be found. In vain did Mary and Joseph search for Him among their kins-folk and acquaintance. For three days they

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sought Him sorrowing, and at length found Him in the temple. It was through no fault of theirs that they lost their Saviour and their God. Yet how earnest was their search for Him, and how keen their grief at having lost Him, and how great their joy when they had found Him once more. We, alas ! have so often lost Him through our own most grievous fault. And the pity of it ! we make so light of the loss. Where to-day are they who seek Jesus sorrowing, like the sinless Virgin Mother, or the sin-laden Magdalen ? A man loses some of the mammon of this world, the mammon of iniquity, as our Saviour calls it ; straightway his heart is sad and sore, and he tries to regain what he has lost. The same man loses his God, sells his right to the joys of heaven for a mess of pottage, and goes his way all heedless of the evil he has brought upon himself. How is this ? It is because with him the grace and friendship of God count for nothing, and the peace of God and the joys of His Kingdom seem as things that are not. He is of the earth, earthy. His heart is set on laying up treasures on earth, where the moth consumes, and where

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thieves break through and steal. Oh ! let us learn, like Mary and Joseph, to seek the one Good in whom are all good things, to seek Jesus our Saviour and the treasure of our souls, to seek Him earnestly, to seek Him with our whole heart, for he who seeks shall find, and to him who knocks the door shall be opened into the house of many mansions, the haven of eternal rest.

XI.

“ HE SUFFERED UNDER PONTIUS PILATE.”

1. Christ foretells His Passion. The Passion cast its dark shadow over the whole life on earth of our Blessed Lord.
2. Our Lord suffered both in body and soul. He suffered hunger, thirst, weariness, scourging, death on the cross. But greater than these were His mental sufferings ; and greatest of all the dereliction.
3. “ Ye are not your own ; ye are bought with a price.” Let us press on toward the mark, to the prize of our high calling in Him who suffered for us.

WE read in the Gospel how our Blessed Lord foretold His passion. The Son of Man, He said to His disciples, shall be delivered to the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and scourged, and spit upon ; and after they have scourged Him, they will put Him to death, and the third day shall He rise again.

I pass over what is known as the hidden life of Christ with Mary and Joseph in the retirement of Nazareth. I pass over in like manner

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His public life, those three years when, as the Evangelist has it, He went about doing good, healing the sick, comforting the sorrowful, calling the sinful to repentance, and preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom. I come to His Passion.

In the strict and narrow sense of the word, the Passion of Christ was of short duration ; it was over in a little time. It began with the agony in the garden on the eve of Thursday, and ended on the afternoon of Friday on Calvary. But in the general sense of suffering, both bodily and mental, it lasted all his life. The shadow of Calvary fell athwart the manger where as a babe our Lord lay in His swaddling clothes ; it darkened the door of the cottage at Nazareth ; it even crept unbidden into the house of gayety and mirth where the guests were gathered for the marriage feast in Cana of Galilee.

It is said that our Blessed Lord was never seen to smile. He had come out of the womb, as the prophet said, to see labor and sorrow. From a child the thought of His Passion and of the sins of the world for which He was to

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suffer was vividly before Him. The Lord had laid upon Him the iniquity of us all, and the grievous load weighed upon Him from the first. He was always the Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with infirmity.

Our Saviour suffered both in His body and in His soul. In His body He suffered from cold and exposure, from hunger and thirst, from want and weariness. Even on the very night of His coming into the world we find Him a shivering Infant in a cave, with no fire to warm Him, no friendly roof to shelter Him. We are told how He spent whole nights in prayer alone on the mountain-tops, exposed to the elements. We learn from His own plaintive words how “foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not whereon to lay His head.”

Out in the wilderness alone, with no companions save the wild beasts, Jesus fasts for forty days and forty nights. Nor is He a stranger to the pangs of forced hunger. St. Luke tells us how one day when He came out from Bethany He was hungry. And when He had seen afar off a fig-tree He came if

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perhaps He might find anything on it ; and when He was come to it, He found nothing but leaves. He knew what it was to be in want, for He was bred in poverty, and had of this world's goods only what the charity of friends bestowed upon Him. Being rich He became poor for our sakes, that through His poverty we might be made rich.

Often in His journeyings up and down Judea in search of the souls that were lost, of the sheep that had strayed from the fold, our Lord suffered from fatigue. We read at one time how He falls asleep through weariness in the boat upon the lake, and at another how, foot-sore with travel, He sits down by Jacob's well whence the woman from Samaria comes to draw water.

And then there are all the bodily pains of the cruel Passion, the bitterness of which no tongue can tell. His head is pierced with thorns, His face is buffeted with blows and sullied with spits, His whole body is torn with scourges, His hands and feet are nailed to the Cross, until after three long hours of agony death comes to free Him from His cruel tor-

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ments. But sharper far than these bodily pains were His mental sufferings, though we can but faintly realize them, because they were not of a nature to impress our senses. He knew from the first that He was the victim for the sins of men, and the Cross cast its awful shadow upon Him from His birth. Even amid the glories of Thabor, where He held converse with Moses and Elias on the day of His transfiguration, His speech was of the excess He was about to accomplish in Jerusalem. He suffered Himself to be tempted even as we are tempted, being made like us in all things, save sin alone. After His fast in the desert, the evil spirit thrice assails Him with subtle arts, but is baffled each time and driven back to his lair. He is brought into close contact with the thousand ills that flesh is heir to in this world, and His pitiful heart is saddened at the sight of so much woe. He took our infirmities and carried our sorrows. He weeps at the grave of Lazarus, and on the day of His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, while all around are singing hosannas to the Son of David, He sheds bitter tears over the city which knew not in that her day the things

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that were to her peace. He, the all-holy One, knowing as only He could know the foulness of sin, and shrinking from it, is yet forced to be in daily contact with it. He suffered, and keenly, from the ingratitude of men. He came unto His own and His own received Him not. His own disciple betrayed Him; another denied Him; all forsook Him when the time of trial came. He trod the wine-press alone. And harder to bear than all else was the thought of the multitudes for whom the shedding of His blood would prove of no avail,—of the multitudes who, in spite of His love for them and the dearly-bought ransom which He paid for them, would harden their hearts against Him, would die impenitent, and go down, countless as the falling leaves in autumn, into eternal death.

Last of all there came that darkness and desolation which He tasted upon Calvary. The sun in heaven refused to give its light at that hour, and the darkness was but the symbol of the deeper gloom which fell upon the spirit of Him who hung upon the Cross. The great, the awful penalty of sin is the loss of God, the

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privation of the beatific light, and this penalty He voluntarily bore for us at that moment. The light of His Father's countenance is withdrawn from Him. Already deserted by His friends, even His Heavenly Father seems now to have deserted Him. The cup of His sufferings is at length full to overflowing, and from those dying lips is forced a cry of anguish, " My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken Me ? "

We are told in the Gospel of a blind man who sat by the wayside begging, while our Blessed Lord was drawing nigh to Jericho. The Fathers find in this blind man a figure or type of the human race. We are all of us more or less blind to the things of the higher life. We sit by the wayside in listless inaction, when we should be pressing toward the mark, to the prize of our high calling in Christ Jesus. Our eyes are holden, and we see not the serene but awful light that shines from the great White Throne.

If thy eye be single, says our Lord, thy whole body shall be lightsome. The single eye is that singleness of purpose which seeks

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first the Kingdom of God and His justice and never falters until this is won. Lord that I may see ! was the cry of the blind man ; Lord that I may see, should be our daily cry. That I may see the folly of my worldliness and the foulness of my sins. That I may see what these sins that sit on me so lightly have cost Thee of suffering and anguish in Thy Passion and upon Thy Cross. That I may see with the eyes of my spirit that place of outer darkness where the worm of unrepented sin dieth not and the fire is not quenched. That I may see the tenderness of Thy love, and the multitude of Thy mercies, and the beauty of the place where Thy glory dwelleth, that seeing I may turn from the pursuit of shadows to follow Thee who art the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

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XII.

“THE THIRD DAY HE AROSE AGAIN FROM THE DEAD.”

1. Easter the greatest and gladdest of festivals. We commemorate a fact and a mystery. Christ foretold that He should rise again.
2. The fact of the resurrection established by testimony. The Jews themselves bear unwilling witness.
3. Christ’s resurrection the cause and type of ours. A twofold death and a twofold resurrection. “He who made you without your own co-operation will not save you without it.”

Conclusion.—“If ye be risen with Christ, seek the things that are above.”

EASTER is at once the greatest and gladdest of festivals. Christmas, indeed, has a greatness and joyousness all its own. But Easter is the goal of its greatness and the crown of its joyousness. At Christmas the Son of God is ushered into a sinful world to suffer and to die. The shadow of Calvary falls athwart the cradle of the Christ-Child. The song of the angels is soon followed by the wail of infants and the

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lamentations of mothers who will not be comforted. But at Easter the sweet voices of those martyred innocents sing alleluias to their risen King.

The fifth article of the Creed embodies a fact and a mystery, the mystery being in the manner of the fact. That Christ rose again from the dead is a fact established by the testimony of witnesses; the manner of His rising is a mystery that we receive by faith. The fact is thus a matter of history, the mystery a thing believed as wrought by the special intervention of God. Moreover, the fact itself is the fulfillment of a prophecy. Not only did the seers of the Old Testament foretell this fact, but Christ Himself, whom it immediately concerned, foretold in the clearest way that He should rise again. "Destroy this temple," He tells the Jews, speaking of the temple of His body, "and I will rebuild it in three days." Again, in words whose meaning no one can miss, He speaks of the resurrection that is to be. "The Son of Man," He says, "shall be betrayed to the high-priests, . . . and they shall condemn Him to death. And they shall deliver

Him to the Gentiles to be mocked and scourged and crucified, and the third day He will rise again.”—Matt. 20: 18. How literally this prophecy was fulfilled, let the Gospels tell.

The Jews knowing that our Saviour had foretold His resurrection, fancied they could hinder Him from making His words come true. They sealed the sepulchre, and set guards over it. All the miracles He wrought in the midst of them; the plain tokens that nature herself gave of His being in truth the Son of God, when at His death on Calvary the sun was darkened, the rocks were riven, the veil of the temple was rent asunder, and even the dead rose from their graves—all these prodigies failed to convince those blinded men that He was God, and that their attempts to defeat His purposes would be vain. But in the gray dawn of that first Easter morning, while the guards are keeping watch, an earthquake shakes the mount of Calvary to its centre, the guards fall terror-stricken, the great stone which stopped the mouth of the sepulchre rolls away:—Christ has arisen from the tomb “the first-fruits of them that sleep.”

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No fact of history is more firmly established by testimony than the fact of Christ's resurrection. The Jews themselves bore unwilling witness to the empty grave. In their blind eagerness to hide the significance of it, they bribed the guards to give out that, while they slept, the disciples came and stole the body of the Master ; as if the words of sleeping witnesses could be taken in evidence. This clumsy fabrication of the Jews could deceive no one. It broke and melted away in the presence of the risen Saviour, as break and melt the mists of night before the risen sun. Soon after His resurrection, Christ appears to Magdalen and the holy women ; He appears to Peter and to the disciples ; He appears to the doubting disciple, and bids him touch and see the reality of the resurrection ; He appears, in fine, to as many as five hundred of the brethren, as St. Paul tells us. Any one who is not persuaded by the weight of testimony put forward in proof of the resurrection is as hopelessly steeled to the force of evidence as were the Jews themselves.

Now, the resurrection of Christ is the cause

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and type of ours. "I am," He tells us Himself, "the resurrection and the life." He is the resurrection because He is the life. Man, made up of body and soul, is meant by the Author of his being to live a twofold life; the physical life, or life of the body, and the spiritual life, or life of the soul. For as the body lives by the soul, so the soul itself lives by the grace of God. The resurrection of the body is a separate article of the Creed, and will be dealt with in its own place. The resurrection of the soul may fittingly be spoken of here.

I have said that man is meant to live a twofold life. So, too, man may die a twofold death. There is the death of the body, in the physical order, and there is the death of the soul, in the spiritual order, beyond all comparison a more awful death, in itself and in its consequences, though many men make so little of it. The cause of this death is mortal sin, called mortal or deadly because it kills the soul. The soul that is in a state of mortal sin lies in a grave, not less but more real for being spiritual, not less but more real for being visible only to God and to His angels. He and He alone who

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raised Lazarus, and afterward rose by His own power from the dead, can raise the soul from this grave of sin to newness of life.

It is the will of God that our spiritual resurrection should be modelled on the bodily resurrection of Christ. Hence, as “Christ rising from the dead, now dieth no more,” for “death hath no more dominion over Him,” so should we be dead to sin; sin should no more have dominion over us. Yet is the Divine Will in this conditioned on our free coöperation with the divine grace, which is, of the soul, the resurrection and the life. In making our wills free, God has ordained that it should rest with ourselves whether the new life of grace is to take deep root in our souls, and grow, and blossom, and bear fruit unto life everlasting. So, to take a homely example, it rests with the husbandman at the beginning of spring whether he shall have a harvest to gather in at the coming of autumn. However fruitful the soil, however good the season, the husbandman knows full well that if he does not put his hand to the plough in the spring he will in vain look for a harvest. On the other hand,

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if he tills the land, puts down the seed, hedges his field about and watches over it, patiently awaiting the early and the later rains, he may safely leave the rest to that Providence who maketh His sun to rise on the good and the wicked and raineth on the just and unjust. Even so, though Christ died and rose again from the dead, though with love unspeakable He poured forth His blood for all men upon the Cross, though the merits of His Passion flow in copious streams for all, through the channels of the sacraments, yet will this be of no avail without our coöperation. “He who created thee without thy own coöperation,” says St. Augustine, “will not save thee without it.”

“If ye be risen with Christ,” says the Apostle, “seek the things that are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of the Father; mind the things that are above, not the things that are upon the earth.” This, then, is the true token of our spiritual resurrection and of the newness of life consequent upon it, that we should seek the things that are above. The things that are upon the earth are things for

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the heathen to seek after, for men who are without Christ in this world. The followers of Christ, who are risen with Christ and walk by the light of faith in His footsteps, know that they have not here a lasting city ; they are taught to seek one to come. It behooves all who call themselves Christians to be true followers of Christ, to be “children of the Resurrection” in deed and in truth, to set no store by the perishable things of earth, but to lay up treasures in heaven where the moth doth not consume and where thieves do not break through nor steal.

XIII.

“ HE ASCENDED INTO HEAVEN.”

1. The ascension of our Lord into heaven an article of faith. Time, place, and circumstances of the ascension.
2. The scene on Mount Olivet and the persons gathered there. Men of Galilee, the spirits of the just made perfect, and the white-robed messengers of God.
3. The gates of heaven opened to mortals for the first time since the fall. Challenge of the angels, and entry of the King of glory.

Conclusion.—Lesson to be learned from our Lord's ascension. Seek the things that are above where Christ sitteth on the right hand of the Father.

THE crowning event in the history of our Saviour's sojourn in this world constitutes an article of faith. We express our belief in it daily, as we recite the Apostles' Creed, when we say : “ He ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty.”

It was forty days after He had risen from the dead that our Lord went up into heaven.

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Like the number seven the number forty seems to have a mystic meaning in Scripture. The term of forty days is a notable scriptural period. For forty days the rain fell in the time of Noah, and for forty days the waters of the deluge covered the whole earth. For forty days Moses was on the mount with God, and for forty days the prophet Elias walked in the strength of the bread which the angel had given him to Horeb, the mount of God. Three times in the life of our Lord does this same term of days occur: (1) between His birth and presentation in the temple; (2) to mark the period of His fast in the desert; (3) between His Resurrection and Ascension. During these forty days our Lord often appeared to His disciples, and spoke to them as St. Luke tells us, of the Kingdom of God. By the Kingdom of God is meant the Church militant on earth to which He Himself so often referred in the course of His mortal life as the Kingdom of Heaven, or the Kingdom of God. It may also mean the Church triumphant, the everlasting Kingdom of God in the highest heaven whence the Son of God had come and whither now He

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was to return, clothed in our human nature, victor over sin and death.

Let us dwell for a moment on the ascension of our Lord. It took place on the fifth day of the week, which according to probable opinion, fell on the 25th of May. The disciples had all come from Galilee and were gathered together in that upper chamber at Jerusalem, the scene of the Last Supper. All at once the risen Lord appears in the midst of them, and having eaten with them, discourses for the last time about His Kingdom and the coming of the Holy Ghost. He then leads them out by Bethany to the Mount of Olives, the place of His agony, now to be the scene of His exaltation.

There on the central peak, as the tradition has it, are gathered around Him for the last time that small band of believers who are destined to bring the glad tidings of His Gospel far beyond the land of Isræl, across seas, and even to the ends of the earth. Peter is there, he of the ardent faith, who has been made the chief shepherd of the flock. John is there, the Beloved Disciple, and James, and the once

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doubting Thomas, now no longer incredulous, for all his doubts and misgivings have melted away like mist before the risen sun. And in the centre of the group, at the right hand of Christ, is His sinless Mother, nearest to Him then as she ever was and still is, and at His sacred feet that other Mary, out of whom He had cast seven devils, once stained through and through with sin, now white as the driven snow. They are all there to hear Him speak for the last time and receive His parting benediction.

And who can describe their emotions of mingled joy and sorrow ; sorrow because they are to lose Him ; joy which rises above and dominates the sorrow, because of His triumph and because in a little while they will be with Him again, never more to part from Him. And now He has spoken His last word with them ; He lifts His hands to bless them, is raised up, and a cloud receives Him out of their sight.

Unseen by the men of Galilee who stand there on the Mount of Olives gazing after their Lord, there are myriads of blessed spirits. There are the angels of the heavenly court who

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have come down to escort their King ; and there are the spirits of just men made perfect, the patriarchs and prophets of the Old Law, and the countless throng of those who, beginning with Adam and Eve, were saved by faith in a Redeemer to come, and who had awaited His coming in the bosom of Abraham, the limbo of the Fathers. All these are in His train. He leads captivity captive and makes those who once were rebels against God and slaves of Satan to be children of God and heirs of His Kingdom.

As they reach the gates of the heavenly Jerusalem, so long closed to the sons of Adam, there goes forth a challenge to the sentinel angels who are standing on the parapets of the holy city, for so we read in the Royal Psalmist : “ Lift up your gates, O ye princes, and be ye lifted up, O eternal gates, and the King of glory shall enter in.” And there comes back the query, as of one in doubt : “ Who is this King of glory ? ” and the answering cry is heard : “ The Lord who is strong and mighty, the Lord who is mighty in battle.” Once more the summons rings out : “ Lift up your gates, O ye princes,

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and be ye lifted up, O eternal gates, and the King of glory shall enter in." And once more is heard the voice of the sentinel angel from the battlements : " Who is this King of glory ? " Then for the last time the answer is given : " The Lord of Hosts, He is the King of glory." Then the gates are thrown wide open, and the Lord of hosts who is mighty in battle, who has broken the power of Satan and conquered sin, enters and is enthroned on the right hand of the Father, that is, in the place of honor, whence, as we believe, He shall come again in glory to judge the living and the dead.

The ascension of our Lord should serve to lift up our hearts and thoughts to our true home above. We have not here a lasting city ; we seek one to come. And alas ! that we should be so little mindful that we are pilgrims here below. So intent are we on the things of this world, the things of time, that for them we are too often willing to sacrifice our hope of gaining the things that are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of the Father. But could there be greater folly ? What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul ?

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Or do we fancy we can serve God and the world at the same time? serve God and mammon? God and our own sinful passions? No man can serve two masters. The great end of our being, the great business of our lives, is the salvation of our souls. And we are told that we must work out our salvation in fear and in trembling. If we do not attend to the work while yet it is day, if we neglect the business, can we expect the work to go on, can we expect the business to prosper? Can the farmer expect to gather a good crop if he does not first, in the sweat of his face, till and fertilize the soil? Will the merchant reap profit from his business if he neglects it, if he takes no thought for its advancement? Surely not. Well, neither can we have any well grounded hope of reaping a harvest of joy in the life beyond if we here neglect the business of our soul's salvation,—if we do not strive earnestly to keep alive and foster the grace of God in our hearts, and so bring forth fruit worthy of penance.

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XIV.

“ HE SHALL COME TO JUDGE THE LIVING AND THE DEAD.”

1. A seasonable gospel. Mortal things speak of mortality.
“ It is appointed unto men once to die, and after that
the judgment.”
2. A twofold judgment after death, one particular, the
other general. Comparison and contrast of the divine
tribunal with the human in the matter of (a) judge,
(b) witness, (c) culprit, (d) sentence.
3. Reasons for the general judgment; that our Lord may
be exalted, that the mask may be torn from the hypo-
crite, that the ways of God may be vindicated.
Conclusion.—Description of the Last Judgment, and ex-
hortation to anticipate by good works a favorable ver-
dict on that day.

THE gospel lesson for the Twenty-Fourth Sunday after Pentecost and the First Sunday of Advent immediately following it, is that of the Last Judgment. Mother Church, ever solicitous for the salvation of souls, wishes to put the thought of the last great day of reckoning distinctly before us, especially at the be-

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ginning and at the end of the religious year. And it must be owned that the season is well fitted to bring to mind and enforce this thought. On every hand, in the world around us, we may now see proofs of the perishable nature of earthly things, tokens of death, emblems of mortality, pointing as with their finger to the common doom of all, to that last solemn act which goes before and ushers in the judgment. We see them in the falling leaf, in the withered flower, in the shortened day. Even the little birds that have taken their flight to warmer and sunnier climes serve to point the moral for us. They serve to warn us that we, too, are but birds of passage, and may not tarry here for long ; that we must leave the nests that we have built for ourselves here, however warm and cosy and well-feathered they may be, when our winter draws nigh ; when the days grow short, and the shadows thicken, and the night falls ; for we have not here a lasting city, but seek one to come.

“It is appointed unto men once to die,” the Apostle tells us, “and after that the judgment.” As soon as the soul quits the body,

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on that instant it appears before the judgment-seat of Christ. Each soul will then render an account of the deeds it has done in the flesh, and receive reward or punishment according to its works. The time for pity and pardon is past ; the time is come for the exercise of strictest justice. If merits there are none it will be too late to think of acquiring them on that day. If the lamp of the love of God has been suffered to go out here, in vain will the soul seek, like the foolish virgins in the parable, to procure oil for it on that day : it can neither be bought nor borrowed.

Let us try to form to ourselves some idea of that dread judgment which we all of us have to undergo as soon as we are summoned away from this world. Most of you have been present at trials in a court of justice. You have seen the judge seated on the bench, clothed with authority to pass sentence. You have seen the accused and the witnesses on whose testimony he is to be condemned or acquitted. This is human justice and a human tribunal. I cite it here, not for the sake of comparison, but rather by way of contrast with the Great

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White Throne of the Heavenly Judge and the justice that is divine. Here the witnesses are men : there they are angels—the good angels to bear testimony to the good works that the man has done, the fallen angels to accuse him of every sin and crime that he has been guilty of. And yet there is no need at all of witnesses, for the conscience of each man will bear witness for or against him on that day, and every thought, word, deed, or omission of his life is written down in the book of God's remembrance. Here it is only one in a thousand that has to answer for his conduct before a court of justice ; there every child of Adam who has come to the use of reason, must give an account of his stewardship ; and every man who here sits in judgment on others will there in his turn be judged. Here the judge is but a man, frail himself and fallible, and perhaps in the eyes of God guilty of graver misdemeanors than the poor wretch that he condemns. There the judge is the all-holy and all-just God Himself, the great Searcher of hearts, from whose eyes nothing is or can be hid.

And this great Judge and God of majesty is

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ever seated on the throne, and His court is ever in session, and every day in the year, and every hour in the day, and every minute in each hour, sentence is being passed on some one at that tribunal. Even as I speak, souls are passing from this world and up to the Great White Throne, and into the presence of One who is seated there, from whose face the earth and the heavens flee away. Thither we shall all of us be summoned one day, God knows how soon, to render an account.

But besides the particular judgment, there is a general judgment. “For God hath appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom He hath ordained, whom He hath raised from the dead.” Acts 17 : 31. That “man” is the Man-God, the Saviour of the world, the Judge of the quick and the dead. On the day of His Ascension from Mt. Olivet, while His disciples were gazing up after Him, as a cloud received Him from their sight, two angels in white garments stood by them, who said : “This Jesus who is taken from you into heaven shall so come as you have seen Him going into heaven.”

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He shall come in the same body that was once nailed to the tree. His coming will be sudden and unlooked for. The day of the Lord shall come as a thief in the night. He shall come in the clouds of heaven with great power and majesty, and all of His angels with Him.

And why this second and general judgment when each soul has already been judged? There are many reasons, some of which are obvious even to us. In the first place it is just that our Blessed Lord who suffered all manner of reproach and was put openly to shame before men while on earth, should be honored by all men and publicly owned for the Son of God and the Saviour and Judge of mankind. "He who humbleth himself shall be exalted." Then, again, it is fitting that they who, like Him, bore the shame of the Cross for His sake, should be honored before men and angels, and that, on the other hand, the impious who were honored here should there be put publicly to shame. It is eminently just, too, that the mask should be torn off the hypocrite and the deceiver. Lastly, in the general judgment God will vindicate His ways to man. What is now

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dark or obscure will be brought to light, and it will be made clear as the noonday sun to all that God is just and merciful in all His dealings with men, and wise and holy and adorable in all His ways.

Truly an awful day will that day be when the Son of Man shall come to judge the world. Before the coming of it there will be signs in the sun and moon and stars, and the powers of the heavens shall be moved. All at once the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the clouds, and the angel's trumpet will sound out summoning the living and the dead to judgment. The wicked, in their terror will call upon the very hills to fall upon them and bury them away from the face of the Judge, but all in vain. In the twinkling of an eye, the dead shall rise from their graves; the sea will give up the dead that are in it, and death and hell will give up the dead that are within them, and all, both great and small, will take their stand before the throne, and the books will be opened, and the dead will be judged by those things that are written in the books, according to their works. Then shall the Judge separate the goats from

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the sheep ; the wicked shall be placed upon His left hand, and the just upon His right.

God grant that there may be found for us a place upon that day of wrath, that dreadful day, even among the lowliest at the right hand of Christ. “ If the just shall scarce be saved where shall the sinner and the wicked appear ? ” It lies with ourselves now to secure a place on the right hand. Let him who is given to strong drink, or given over to the vice of impurity, or a victim to the sordid love of lucre ; let him hasten to free himself from the fetters which his sin has forged for him ere yet it be too late. Let no one suffer Satan to deceive him with the lying promise of a tardy, or perhaps death-bed repentance ; for what sentence can a man who has done the works of Satan all his life expect to receive at that tribunal where every man is judged according to his works, if not the sentence of condemnation ? Let us then while there yet is time turn from the ways of darkness and walk the way of God’s holy commandments, the way of light and of love, that upon the last day we may take our places with the doers of good works

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at the right hand of our Lord, and hear from His own lips those words of sweetest consolation: “Come, ye blessed of my Father, possess the Kingdom that was prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”

XV.

“I BELIEVE IN THE HOLY GHOST.”

1. Name of the Holy Spirit not a special name—why. That the Holy Spirit is God, co-equal with the Father and the Son, proved by Scripture.
2. The Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son. This is defined by the Church, proved by Scripture and by reason.
3. The Holy Spirit the Lord and Giver of life. He gives life to the Church as a whole and to all the members.

Conclusion.—Let us not be dead members—withered branches on the Tree of Life.

“I BELIEVE in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of life, who proceedeth from the Father and the Son; who together with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified; who spoke by the prophets.” This is the ninth article of the Catholic Creed as held from the first, and explicitly defined in the First General Council of Constantinople against the heresy of Macedonius. The Holy Ghost is the name of the

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Third Person of the Blessed Trinity. It is not a special name, such as is that of the other two Divine Persons ; for God is a Spirit, and each of the other Persons is as truly a Holy Spirit as He is truly God. But we conceive and speak of God in a human way, nor can we otherwise conceive and speak of Him but after a human fashion, for we are human. Now we know by faith that the Second Person of the Trinity was begotten or born of the first before the day-star, and thus we know that the two stand in the relation of Father and Son, and therefore we call the first the Father and the second the Son. So far we are, as it were, on familiar ground. We know what birth means, and we know the nature of the relationship that springs from it, and we have special names for the parent and the offspring. But to the procession of the Third Person from the other two we can find nothing similar in this world. It is something which passes human knowledge and human experience, something wholly divine, something of which we can form no distinct idea ; and therefore it is that for the Person who thus proceeds we can find no special name, and can

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only use a name that would equally apply to either of the other two Divine Persons.

Now we believe as of Catholic faith that the Holy Ghost is true God, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and the Son, having one and the same divine nature with them, though a distinct Person, and therefore with the Father and the Son to be adored and glorified. This is plain not only from the teaching of the Church in her creeds or symbols of faith, but from Scripture as well. He in whose name and by whose power men are baptized, raised from the grave of sin to newness of life and made children of God, is surely no creature, but very God. And God the Son Himself it is who tells us that we are baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost; in the name, mark you, for the three have one name in common, and that is God. And again in the *Acts of the Apostles* we find how St. Peter spoke to Ananias saying “Why hath Satan tempted thy heart, that thou shouldst lie to the Holy Ghost?” and he adds: “Thou hast lied not to men but to God;” and St. John in his first Epistle tells us that “There are three who give

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testimony in heaven the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one."

But furthermore it is of Catholic faith that the Holy Ghost proceeds, not from the Father only, but from the Father and the Son. This has been the teaching of the Church from the first, though it was denied by Macedonius in the fourth century, and is denied to this day by his followers, the members of the Greek Church. It is also set forth with sufficient clearness in the Scripture. Our Lord speaking to His disciples of the Paraclete, the Holy Ghost, whom He was going to send them, said: "And He shall glorify Me, because He shall receive of mine." Thus the Holy Spirit glorifies the Son as well as the Father, because He receives from the Son as well as from the Father the attributes of the Godhead. Again, the Third Person of the Trinity is expressly spoken of as the Spirit of the Son. For not only is it written: "It is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you;" but it is also written: "He who hath not the Spirit of Christ, is not His;" and again: "God hath sent the Spirit of His Son into

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your hearts, crying Abba, Father." This is also seen from the very nature of things. For the Holy Ghost is the Spirit of love, the living and consubstantial love of the Father and the Son. Now love depends for its origin not only on the mind but on the concept or idea that is in the mind. We cannot love anything of which we do not first form an idea. But the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity is the Word or Concept or Idea of God the Father, begotten from eternity in the mind of the Father in His own image and likeness. Hence, the Holy Ghost the Spirit of love, the Divine Love, has His origin from the Word or Concept of God, that is God the Son, as well as from God the Father, and is thus the living mutual Love of the Father and the Son.

The Creed teaches us, moreover, that the Holy Ghost is the Lord and Giver of life. Thus the Father is the Creator, the Son the Redeemer, and the Holy Ghost the Life-giver, the giver, that is, of that higher life which makes men to be children of God. Not that the Father, or the Son, or the Holy Ghost does anything which the other two Persons do not in like manner.

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We are told in the Creed of St. Athansius that the Father is Almighty, the Son Almighty, and the Holy Ghost Almighty. Yet they are not three Almhighties, but one Almighty. What the Father does, then, that the Son does, and that the Holy Ghost does in like manner. But the work of creation is appropriated, that is ascribed in a peculiar sense as being proper to the Father, who is the First Person of the Trinity and the source of all things. And the work of redemption is appropriated to the Son, who was sent by the Father into the world to take human nature and pay with His blood the price of our redemption. So to the Holy Ghost is appropriated the work of sanctification, that is of restoring to man the life he has lost by sin, because He was sent into the world by the Father and the Son to accomplish this work. The Holy Ghost is thus the life of the Church, or rather the Life-giver. It is He who breathes life into the Church as a whole and into every individual member of the Church.

Before the coming of the Holy Ghost the Church of God had no existence as an organic body. The plan of the work was there, and the

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material out of which it was to be fashioned ; but that was all. And how poor that material was, humanly speaking, we know from the Gospel narrative. Those who afterwards became pillars of the Church, what were they before the day of Pentecost ? Common fisher-folk, without learning, dull of understanding, slow of speech, timid, men of no account. Yet these were the men who went out from that upper chamber in Jerusalem strong in faith and fearless, mighty in word and work, to teach all nations and bring an unbelieving world to the feet of Christ. The same Spirit that made the Apostles what they were, and built up the Church from the first, and quickened it with life, is still with the Church, is still in the Church, the source of her strength, and unity, and undying life. Men wonder at the vitality of the Church, and are amazed. They see nothing like it in the whole world. Other institutions flourish for a time, and then, obeying the law of their nature, grow old and decay. But the Church renews her youth, and gains fresh vigor, and extends her conquests as the centuries roll on their course. There is no other institution

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left standing, says Lord Macaulay, which carries the mind back to the time when the smoke of sacrifice rose from the Pantheon, and when cameleopards and tigers bounded in the Flavian amphitheatre. No, and the reason is obvious, though he failed to see it; for every other institution is human, but the Church is divine, and therefore imperishable because she has with her and within her the Lord and Giver of life. And as the rays which come from the sun give both light and warmth to the things that live and grow upon the earth, so the Holy Ghost, who descended upon the Apostles in the form of tongues of fire, sheds the light of divine truth into the minds, and pours forth the warmth of divine love into the hearts of those who live and walk in newness of life. And as it is the head in which are all the senses and the faculty of knowledge to guide the other members of the body, so it is in the Head of the Church, the Vicar of Christ on earth, that shines the light of divine truth by the operation of the Holy Spirit for the guidance of all the members scattered far and wide over all the earth. And therefore it is that in the

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Catholic Church, and in the Catholic Church only, the multitude of believers have still but one heart and one soul, are still perfect in the same mind and in the same judgment as were the Christians in apostolic days after the illumination of Pentecost.

The Church of God is thus a divine organism quickened with life by God's Holy Spirit. Hence our Lord likens it to a grain of mustard seed, which is the least of all seeds, but which when put in the ground grows into a great tree so that the birds of the air come and dwell in its branches. Look at the trees in spring when the leaves are forming, and you will see an image of the Church of God. You will notice on many if not all of them branches or twigs without a single leaf. You will find if you look more closely that these branches or twigs are dry and withered ; the sap, which is to the tree what the blood is to the body, has ceased to circulate through them ; they are dead. So in the Church of God there are dead members, as many as are in the state of mortal sin. They do not live the life of the Church ; they do not respond to the quickening action

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of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God, the Lord and Life-Giver, has no use for such dead members. He warns them in manifold ways, bidding them to be converted and live, lest they be cut down and cast into the fire. Let us not be as dry and withered branches on the Tree of Life, but let us so live, so correspond with the gracious influence of God's Holy Spirit, that we may bring forth fruit unto life everlasting.

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XVI.

“I BELIEVE IN THE HOLY CATHOLIC CHURCH.”

1. The Holy Church is, in the logical order, the first article of the Creed. The Church is the Kingdom of God on earth; a divine organism, in the world but not of it.
2. The Church a perfect society. Baptism makes us members of it, but to retain membership there is need of more. We must believe what God teaches in the sense in which He teaches it, and do what He wills in the way He wills it.
3. No one comes into the Church to pick and choose. Obedience to lawful pastors essential.

Conclusion.—The Church built upon a Rock.

In the logical order this would be the first article of the Creed. The Church is our spiritual Mother. She has begotten us in Christ. From Her we have the gift of faith. She alone it is who teaches us with unerring certainty the truths that God has revealed.

The Church is the religious society founded by our Blessed Lord. The word which stands

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for it in the New Testament first meant a calling forth, and by usage came to signify a number of men called together for worship, a congregation. It is worthy of note that as often as our Blessed Lord used the word, He employed it not in any narrow or local sense, but to denote the religious society which He came on earth to establish, the congregation of all the faithful. "He who doth not hear the Church," He says, "let him be to thee as the heathen and the publican," and to St. Peter: "Upon this rock I will build My Church," etc.

In its widest sense, the Church includes all true believers from the beginning of the world even to the end. In this sense we distinguish three Churches, or rather three states of the same Church, according as it is triumphant in heaven, suffering in purgatory, or militant on earth. It is with the last alone that we now have to do.

We understand by the Church, then, as I have already said, the religious society founded by Jesus Christ, or, to define it more fully, the society of all the faithful, who, being baptized, profess the same faith, partake of the same

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sacraments, and are governed by their lawful pastors under one visible head on earth. In the first place, the Church founded by Christ is a society. We mean by this that she is an organized body of men united by a common bond and working together for a common end. It is very plain from the New Testament that our Lord founded such a body as this. He speaks of it as His Kingdom, the Kingdom of God, the Kingdom of Heaven. To His Apostles He gives supreme authority in this Kingdom. “Whatever you shall bind on earth shall be bound also in heaven.” He makes them the chief pastors and teachers: “Go, teach all nations,” He bids them, “Go into the whole world, and preach the Gospel to every creature.” “He who hears you, hears Me.” St. Peter, the prince of the Apostles, He makes the head of His Church, and the pastor of pastors.

St. Paul likens the Church to the human body, which has many members, no two having the same act. In other words, according to the Apostle, the Church is a living organism, an organized body, a true society. For the

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rest, the history of the world since the Christian era bears witness in every age to the existence of a religious society which calls itself Christian, and is known to the world as the Church of Christ.

But not only is the Church a society ; it is a perfect society. In every society there are three essential elements : (1) a number of men ; (2) a bond of union ; (3) a common end. The greater the number of men, the closer the bond of union, the higher the end aimed at, the more perfect the society. In none of these three respects is there any society on earth to compare with the Church of Christ. The multitude of its members in every age is past counting. Its bond of union is the strongest and closest that can knit the hearts of men together ; it is the bond of charity, of divine love. The end aimed at is the noblest and loftiest that men can set themselves to compass ; to live godly and justly in this world looking forward to the blessed hope and the coming of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.

The Church of Christ, the Church of the New Testament, is then a society and a perfect

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society. The members of it are the baptized, and only the baptized. Baptism is, as it were, the gate through which men enter into the fold of Christ. We have Christ's own word for this: "Unless a man is born again of water and the Holy Ghost, He cannot enter into the Kingdom of God." And again: "He who believes and is baptized shall be saved."

But Baptism though essential is not enough to make one a member of the Church. One must also profess the faith and follow the same worship, based on the same sacraments, as all the other members. Not to do this is to be cut off from membership and become a heretic, which primarily means one who picks and chooses in matters of religion, one who believes and worships apart from the rest and follows his own judgment instead of conforming himself to the received teaching of the Church. No man who comes to pick and choose, no man who sets up his private opinion or private judgment against the judgment or teaching of the Church can be a member of the Church. What is more, no man who does this can be saved, unless he be excused on the score of inculpable

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ignorance. This is so plain, I was going to say so self-evident, that it passes understanding how any one who professes to believe in Christ can fail to see it. If God had not given a revelation to man, if the Son of God had not founded a Church and fixed a form of worship, then, of course each man could seek after the truth and worship God in his own way. But as God has given a revelation, and as the Son of God has founded a Church, and fixed a form of worship, it is clearly the duty of man to believe what God has taught in the sense in which God has taught it, and to worship God in the way that God wishes to be worshipped.

The Church of the New Testament is the Church of Christ. In that Church all professed the same faith and joined in the same worship. The multitude of believers, St. Luke tells us, had but one heart and one soul. No man came into that Church to pick and to choose ; no man could set up his judgment against that of the Church. “ If an angel from heaven preach you another Gospel, let him be anathema.” “ Mark those who make dissensions and avoid them.” “ He who will not hear the Church

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let him be to thee as the heathen and publican." "He who believes not shall be condemned." What did our Lord require men to believe on peril of their souls? The Gospel, the whole Gospel, the whole revealed truth. There was to be no trifling with the truth, no choosing this because it seemed reasonable, and setting that aside because it was hard of belief. No, they were to believe the whole Gospel of God or run the certain risk of losing their souls. Such being the case, I say that unity of belief and of worship is of the very constitution of the Church founded by Jesus Christ, and where such unity is wanting in a religious body there the Spirit of Christ doth not abide.

Once more, those only are members of the Church of Christ who are governed by their lawful pastors under one visible head on earth. It is plain that obedience to the pastors of the Church is a condition of membership. "He who despises you despises Me." "All power is given to Me: Go, therefore teach all nations." "Obey your prelates." Equally plain is it that all who belong to the Church of Christ are to be under one visible head on earth.

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Christ founded one society, one Church, and in any society which is one there can be only one head, one supreme ruler. “Other sheep have I that are not of this fold; these also must I bring and there shall be but one fold and one shepherd.” Who is this one shepherd? Without any doubt Christ Himself is the Great Shepherd of the sheep. But He no longer visibly feeds them. Hence, when He was about to quit this world, He left one supreme shepherd in His own stead, Simon, son of John who was called Peter, to feed both the sheep and the lambs of His flock, which is to say both the pastors and the people of His Church.

Thank God that we are members of the one true Church of Christ, and hear the voice of the shepherd that He has set over His sheep. With the great St. Jerome we greet the successor of the fisherman: like him, we who follow no chief but Christ, glory in this that we are united in communion with the Chair of Peter, for we know that upon this Rock the Church is built. For nineteen hundred years has it stood unshaken, fulfilling the prophetic words of its Founder that the gates of

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hell should not prevail against it. The corroding rains of nineteen centuries have fallen, and the floods of impiety and unbelief have been poured forth, and the fierce winds of persecution have beat upon it, but it still stands as staunch as it was at the beginning, because it is founded upon a Rock.

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XVII.

THE CHURCH.

1. The framework of the Church. It is a living organism, having a body and a soul. Those alone are true members who are in organic union with the Church.
2. The Church a visible society, visible as well to the reason of man as to his senses.
3. In this visible Church there is a visible pledge of union. It is the Blessed Eucharist, the Bread of Angels. The obligation of Easter Communion.

WE have seen that the Church is by Christ's own institution, a true society, that is to say, a body of men united by a common bond and working together for a common end. We have also seen that the Church is as we should expect from the fact that it had for its founder the Son of God Himself, the most perfect of societies. We will now examine the framework and inner nature of this Church of the living God, which is the pillar and ground of the truth.

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St. Paul likens the Church to a living organism, to the human body, and calls it the body of Christ. And as in every living organism we distinguish two things, the body and the soul, the matter and the principle of life which pervades it, so it is in the Church. And as in man the body is visible to the eye, but the soul invisible, so again in the Church. The body of the Church is the society of men professing the same faith and governed by their lawful pastors under one visible head on earth. The soul is the grace of God, the fruit of our Saviour's passion, which is applied to the souls of men by the Holy Ghost, and which makes men the sons of God by adoption and co-heirs with Christ of the Kingdom of Heaven.

From this it follows that they alone can claim full membership in the Church of Christ who are in organic union with it, i. e., who belong to the visible communion of the faithful and at the same time live by its life. Those who are in mortal sin, if they still hold fast the faith, belong indeed to the Church, but are dead members of it, dead branches on the tree of life and liable to fall off. In the physical world,

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after a storm, you will find the dead branches strewing the ground. So, in the spiritual world, it is the dead and withered branches that fall away from the Church when the tempest of temptation arises and the time of trial comes. Yet are these sinners, so long as they cleave to the faith, members of the Church. Men have said that the Church comprises only the just. But these men gainsay the Founder of the Church who likens the Kingdom of Heaven, which is the Church, to a net cast into the sea, and taking up all sorts of fishes, and who tells us that He will have the grain and the cockle to grow up together until the harvest.

By baptism men are made members of the Church. Hence the unbaptized are in no way members, though neophytes, if they already have faith and repentance, belong to the soul of the Church ; and the same may be said of those who, being outside the visible communion of the Church through no fault of theirs, firmly believe in the true God and in Jesus Christ whom He has sent. But those who knowingly and wilfully reject the Catholic Faith once delivered to the saints, that is to say, formal her-

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etics, are by the very act cut off from the Church as are also those who rise up in rebellion against the visible head of the Church, and who are known as schismatics.

The Church founded by Christ is a visible society. Again men have denied this, and set up for themselves an invisible Church, forgetting that “If the Lord build not the house they labor in vain who build it.” Nothing is plainer in Scripture than that the Church is a visible body. In the Old Testament it is spoken of by the prophets over and over again as the mountain of the Lord, or as a city set up on a hill. The Church as it stands out in the pages of the New Testament is, as we have seen, a society. Its members are men, not angels, not pure spirits, and therefore it must needs be visible. Men are made members of it by a visible rite, baptism, and profess their faith by visible signs, and in many ways give visible token of membership in it.

The word “visible” denotes that which may be seen ; primarily what may be seen with the eye, and secondarily what may be seen by the intellect or reason. When we say that the

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Church is visible, we have in mind both meanings of the word, but especially the latter. The Church is visible in the former sense, *i. e.*, to the eye, inasmuch as the men who belong to it are visible, and give visible signs of their being members of it. It is visible in the latter sense, inasmuch as it makes itself known to the reason of man as the religious society founded by Jesus Christ. One might argue from the very nature of the case that the Church would be visible in this formal sense, for to what purpose would it exist at all if men should be unable to see and know it. And so, as a matter of fact our Lord willed His Church to be visible that all might find it, that it might be a plain way to life, such that even the fool should not err therein. To the teachers of the Church He says ; “ You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid.” Again He says ; “ If he will not hear thee tell the Church. And if he will not hear the Church let him be to thee as the heathen.” That must a visible teacher, a visible tribunal, before which delinquents are to be brought, and which is to pass sentence on them. The Apostle too, tells us

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that he and the other teachers of the Church “are made a spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men.”

At another time we shall see that our Blessed Lord was pleased to make His Church so plainly visible by means of certain marks or notes that the sincere seeker after the truth should be able to point it out with his finger as the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. In the meantime we shall do well to consider that it will profit us nothing to be visibly in communion with the Church of Christ if we do not live its life; to be Catholics in name and outward seeming if we are not so in deed and truth.

In His visible Church our Lord has left a visible pledge of His love for man, which is at the same time the source from which the life of the Church draws its nourishment, I mean the Holy Eucharist. To serve as a figure of it He first wrought the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves, of which we read in the Gospel. The one was the bread which feeds the body; the other is the bread that feeds the soul. “I am the bread of life,” He tells

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us, “he who eats of this bread shall live forever:” “And the bread that I will give is My flesh for the life of the world.” And once more: “Except you eat of the flesh of the Son of Man you shall not have life in you.” To be living members of the mystical body of Christ we must feed upon the real Body of Christ in the Sacrament of the Eucharist. Therefore does Holy Church command every one of her children who has come to the years of discretion and who can discern the Body of the Lord to receive the Holy Communion at least once a year, and that within the paschal season, on pain of being liable to be cut off from her communion in life and in death to be deprived of Christian burial. The obligation of Easter Communion remains in force until it has been complied with. Even when the appointed time is past there still remains the obligation of receiving as soon as possible. It is the part of a loyal Catholic not only to fulfil this precept of the Church but to do so in season, not to be putting off the performance of Easter duty until the last days of the paschal time as if it were an irksome task, but rather

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to hasten to this banquet of the soul in which Christ is received, His Passion renewed, the mind is filled with grace, and a pledge is given us of future glory.

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XVIII.

THE CHURCH.

1. The Church founded by Christ distinguished by certain marks or notes. These notes are attributes belonging to the Church by the will of her Divine Founder. They are set before us in the New Testament.
2. (a) The Church is revealed in the N. T. as one, in faith, in polity, in life; (b) as holy, in doctrine, in her sacraments, in the lives of her children; (c) as Catholic in space and in time and in the power of accommodating herself to changing circumstances; (d) as apostolic in doctrine, in mission, in ministry by unbroken succession from the Apostles. "And lo! I am with you always even to the end of the world."

THE Church founded by Christ is a society of men, not of angels, and therefore visible to the senses. It is moreover the teacher of truth; the judge from whose sentence there is no appeal. It is therefore visible, not to the senses only, but to the reason of man as well. In other words it may be known with certainty as the true Church of Christ, and it is so known

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by means of certain notes which serve to mark it off from all other religious societies.

A note or mark is that which makes a thing known. It is a distinctive sign, not common to many, for then it would no longer be a note, but proper and peculiar to one. The notes of the Church are those set forth in the Nicene Creed : I believe in the one, holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church. Let it be borne in mind that these notes are not arbitrarily set down by the will of man. It is by the will of Christ her Founder that the Church is one and holy and Catholic and Apostolic ; and oneness, holiness, Catholicity, and Apostolicity belong to the very constitution of the Church founded by Jesus Christ.

But how do we know that Christ willed His Church to be one and holy and Catholic and Apostolic ? How do we know what belongs to the constitution of any society ? Obviously by looking up the archives or records of that society. Well, the records of the Church's foundation are contained in the New Testament. Turning to these we find that our Lord, in the first place, willed His Church to be one,

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one in faith, one in government, one in its organic life. He likens it to things that are essentially one, now to a sheepfold under one shepherd, now to a family whereof the head is one, and now to a kingdom in which the supreme authority is vested in one person. That He willed the Church to be one in faith really needs no proof, for it means simply this, that He willed men to believe the Gospel which He gave to the world, not in any sense which they might choose to put upon it, but in the sense in which He, the Teacher of Truth, meant it to be understood. Hence He charges the first teachers of His Church to preach the Gospel to every creature and declares that he who believes and is baptized shall be saved, but that he who believes not shall be condemned. On the eve of His Passion, as we read in St. John, He prayed the Father that His disciples might be one, and not only the disciples there gathered with Him, but also, He said, all those who through their preaching should believe in Him ; that they might be one, even as He and the Father were one, and that so the world should believe that the Father had sent Him. Hence the Apostle

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bids believers to be perfect in the same mind and in the same sense, and writing to the Ephesians exhorts them to be “careful to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. One body and one spirit,” he says, “as you are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all.” And writing to the Corinthians, he speaks of the Church as a living organism which is therefore one because all the parts are held together in unity by the one principle of life. “For in one spirit were we all baptized into one body, whether Jew or Gentile, whether bond or free.” We are not therefore surprised to read in the *Acts of the Apostles* that the multitude of believers had but one heart and one soul, so convinced were they that unity was essential. Lastly, our Lord willed His Church to be one in government. For to one He gave supreme authority symbolized by the giving of the keys; one He made the chief shepherd of His flock to feed both the sheep and the lambs; one He made a Rock unshaken in the faith and the confirmers of his brethren.

As for holiness we need but recall what this

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attribute means to see that it, too, must be a mark of the Church. To be holy is to be free from sin, but it is more than this. To be holy is to be good, but it is more than this, too. It is to be good not merely in the eyes of men but in the eyes of God. Holiness is such goodness as comes of the grace of God and not from nature merely; a goodness above nature. Now it goes without saying that our Lord willed His Church to be holy, holy in its doctrine, in its worship, in all the ordinances whereby the lives of men may be made holy. For this very end He came into the world that He might do away with sin, overthrow the empire of Satan, and cleanse unto Himself a people, as the Apostle has it, acceptable, a pursuer of good works. He would have men perfect as His Father in heaven is perfect, and as far as in Him lay He did all that was needful for this end. He shed His own blood to cleanse us from our sins; He gave Himself up for us a victim and an offering in the odor of sweetness; He left to us abundant means of leading a holy life; a lofty moral doctrine, an heroic example, and the grace which flows from the

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sacraments, those fountains of living water that leaps up unto life everlasting.

Next is the note of Catholicity. The word Catholic is from the Greek and means universal. What universal itself means we all of us have a more or less clear idea. It means all-embracing. It is sharply opposed to that which is local or particular, as the whole is opposed to the part. To be Catholic, then, the Church must preach the whole Gospel, the whole doctrine of Christ, and not merely a part of it. To be Catholic the Church must not be confined to some particular nation and race of people or to some particular land, but must embrace all nations and find a home in all lands. To be Catholic the Church must not live for a season only or announce the glad tidings of salvation merely to the men of a particular age. It must live as long as the world lasts, as long as there are souls to be saved. It must then be Catholic or universal in doctrine, in place, and in time.

That our Lord willed His Church to be Catholic in this threefold sense is evident as well from the scope of His mission in the world

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as from His own words. He came to offer the means of salvation not to the men of any one nation or any one age only, but to the men of all nations and of all ages ; and the Gospel which He first gave to the world He could not but will to be delivered in its integrity to each succeeding generation of men. Hence He charges the Apostles to go out into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature ; or as St. Matthew has it, “ Go teach all nations, and lo ! I am with you always, even to the end of the world.”

Finally, the Church of Christ is Apostolic. This is the fourth note of the Church. Apostolicity means that the Church has its origin and doctrine and ministry from the Apostles. Christ Himself chose the twelve Apostles ; He made them the supreme teachers, and to them committed the government of His Church. Hence St. Paul says that the Church is built on the foundation of the Apostles, Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone. Now Apostolicity as a note of the Church means that the pastors of the true Church in every age must be able to trace their succession in unbroken

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series from the Apostles ; must derive their right to rule the Church and their commission to preach the Gospel from those whom Christ Himself appointed the first rulers and pastors of His Church. This follows from the fact that the Church is a divine society whose constitution and form of government have been fixed for all time by Christ Himself. It is also plain from the solemn words in which our Lord delivers their commission to the Apostles : “ And lo ! I am with you always even to the consummation of the world.”

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XIX.

THE TRUE CHURCH.

1. Which is the true Church ? There are many claimants, but only one can be true. The true Church is that which Peter teaches and rules. She alone is one, holy, Catholic, and Apostolic.
2. The Church ruled over by the successor of the Fisherman possesses a principle of unity that no other religious body possesses. She gives proof of holiness in the power of working miracles, in the heroic sanctity of so many of her children, in her wondrous missionary work. She is Catholic by the consent of mankind, and shows to the world the title-deeds of her succession from the Apostles. She is the one true teacher, and the one living witness for Christ in the world.

THE Church of which Christ is the Founder, was by the will and institution of Christ Himself to be one, holy, Catholic, and Apostolic. The proof of this, as has been pointed out, lies on the very surface of the New Testament, and he who runs may read. There are to-day in the world many religious bodies, many churches, professing to be Christian and claim-

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ing each to be the Church founded by Jesus Christ. Now all of these but one are clearly false claimants, for, as I have already shown, our Blessed Lord founded but one Church.

Which, then, is this one true Church ? The thing cannot for a moment be doubtful ; it is that which is in communion with the See of Peter, which is built upon the Rock against which the gates of hell can never prevail. It alone has the notes or marks which are and were meant to be the visible tokens of the true Church. It alone is one, holy, Catholic, and Apostolic.

And first, it is one ; one in faith, one in worship, one in government or polity, one as an organic whole whose parts are knit together by the vital bond of a common faith and life. It is one in government because it has one visible head on earth whom all obey. It is one in worship ; the great act of Christian worship is the sacrifice first offered on Calvary and since continued after an unbloody manner in the Mass ; and this is one throughout the Catholic world. The rites may vary as well as the language of the liturgy, but this no more affects

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the unity of this great act of worship than do the varying colors of the priestly vestments. The Church is one in faith. It offers to the world the unique spectacle of some 250,000,000 of men scattered up and down the whole habitable globe differing in race, in language, in customs, manners, tastes, and views upon every earthly matter that man can form an opinion upon, yet agreeing in faith, holding the same truth, believing all that the holy Catholic Church teaches. Surely here is the prayer of Christ fulfilled—“that they may be one” Here are two bonds of union, an external one, the obedience of all the members to one supreme head on earth, and an internal one, the bond of a common faith which is the life of the Church (for “my just man liveth by faith”), and which unites all as members of one body or organism, each sharing the life which is common to all. In vain will you look for such unity outside of the Catholic Church. There is no bond of union. There is no central authority, as in the Catholic Church, to which all owe obedience; there is no one supreme, unerring teacher and judge to set forth the truth

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in matters of faith and lay down the law in matters of conduct. Each man is his own teacher and a law unto himself.

The mark of holiness belongs to the Catholic Church. The doctrine which she teaches is a holy doctrine, and to all men she offers the means of living a holy life. We who belong to her know and can bear witness that if our lives fall short, as they do, of the standard of Christian perfection, the fault is ours not hers. And not only does this mark of holiness belong to the Catholic Church ; it belongs to her alone. She alone has shown herself capable of bringing forth fruits of holiness worthy of the spotless spouse of Christ. Holiness, as I have already said, is no mere freedom from sin and no mere natural goodness ; it is something more, something above nature, something coming from above, and as such a mark of the Church founded by Him who was above nature and came from above.

Now the Catholic Church alone can show such holiness as this in the lives of her members, in the miracles whereof she has the gift, in the work that she has done and still does in

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the world. You will find good men in every sect and schism, and even outside the pale of Christianity ; but if you would see virtue in an heroic degree, if you look for saints, if you look for men in whose lives the working of the grace of God is plainly visible, you must turn to the Catholic Church, the nurse of holiness and the mother of saints.

Again, what other Church has ever claimed the gift of miracles and made good the claim in every age down to our own day, but the Catholic Church ? And what other Church but this has proved her divine mission by the fecundity of her work in the world ? She it was who first converted the nations, and triumphed over the paganism of the mighty Roman empire by the preaching of the Gospel of peace. She it was who subdued, not with carnal weapons, but with the word of God which is keener than any two-edged sword, the hordes of fierce barbarians who, later on, overran and conquered the ancient empire of the Romans, converting the savage Goth and Vandal and Hun into meek followers of the Prince of Peace. She it was who converted and civilized the Frank, the

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Teuton, the Saxon, and the Celt in the Old World, and, nearer to our own day, the tribes of wild Indians who first peopled America. To any other religious body which lays claim to a divine mission we say, then: Prove that you have a mission from Christ: show to the world even one man whom you have brought to sainthood, work even one genuine miracle, make Christians of even one heathen nation and introduce Christian civilization among even one savage people.

And the note of Catholicity, where shall we find it if not in the Church of all nations and all times, the Church which, as Macaulay says, was great and respected, and we will add Catholic, before the Frank crossed the Rhine or the Saxon set foot in Britain, the Church which is still greater and more respected to-day, which finds a home in all lands, which comes as a stranger to none, which adapts herself without changing to the changeful conditions of time and place, which is ever renewing her youth and ever bears about her tokens of her undying life. In her alone are fulfilled the words of our Blessed Lord: " Go teach all nations, and lo ! I

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am with you always even to the end of the world." She has taught and still teaches the nations of the world ; she preaches the Gospel of Christ, the whole Gospel and in the same sense, in all lands, not speaking with one voice here and with another there, with one voice now and with another again, but ever and everywhere with the same voice the self-same truths. She is Catholic by the consent of mankind. The world knows of but one Catholic Church, and never has known of another. A sect or fragment that has broken away from the body of the Church may take to itself the title of Catholic ; but that title is too big for it, it falls off, and the world always restores it to its rightful owner.

And lastly, this Church which is one and holy and Catholic is also Apostolic. She is heir to the Apostolic doctrine, and her mission and her ministry are Apostolic. She alone can make good the claim to apostolic descent ; she possesses the title-deeds of her succession from the Apostles, and she shows them to the world. She can point with her finger on the page of authentic history to the time and the place

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where the first heresy and the first schism arose ; when Arius was cast out from her and Nestorius ; when the Church of Constantinople went into schism ; when Luther and Calvin unfurled the banner of revolt. She can trace herself back, step by step, century by century, to the time of the Apostles, and show that her mission is from them. She is the one true teacher and the one living witness in every century since then for Him who sent His Apostles saying, “ Go teach all nations, and lo ! I am with you always even to the end of the world.”

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XX.

THE TRUE CHURCH.

The Church founded by Christ upon a Rock indefectible and infallible: she cannot fail, neither can she fall into error.

1. The Church cannot fail, but is destined to endure to the end of the world. The fact that she has survived so long is in some sort a guarantee of this. Our faith, however, rests on the sure promise of Christ.
2. The Church cannot go astray. Because indefectible she is also infallible. Even the synagogue was an organ of divine truth, how much more the Church of the living God, which is the pillar and ground of the truth. The successor of Peter the spokesman of God's infallible Church.

BESIDES the four properties of the Church which are also her notes or marks by which she manifests herself to men as the true Church of Christ, there are two other properties that are deserving of attention, i. e., indefectibility and infallibility. These two are closely bound up together. That is indefectible which cannot fail or cease to be; that is infallible which cannot

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err or go astray. Hence indefectibility is that endowment of the Church in virtue of which she has lived through all the centuries that have passed away since our Lord went up into heaven, and is to endure to the end of time; infallibility is that endowment in virtue of which the Church cannot err in teaching the doctrines of the faith once delivered to the saints.

The fact that the Church has survived the storms of fierce persecution that beat against her in the past, has survived all assault from without and within, for nearly nineteen hundred years, is in itself a pretty good guarantee that she will last until the end. No other institution is left standing, says Macaulay, that carries the mind back to the time when the smoke of sacrifice rose from the Pantheon, and when tigers and leopards bounded in the Flavian amphitheatre. The centuries behind her are strewn with the wreck of kingdoms and of empires which were of the earth, and therefore have shared the fate of all earthly things. But she is still full of life and youthful vigor, because she is not of the earth, because though in the world she is not of the

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world, but like her Founder, superhuman and divine. Therefore the eternal years of God are hers.

Our faith in the indefectibility of the Church rests upon the sure promise of our Lord. She will endure because He wills her to endure, and mighty is His Name. To the men whom He chose to be the teachers and rulers of the Church He made the solemn promise: Lo, I am with you always even to the consummation of the world. And to the prince of them all, him whose name He had changed from Simon into Peter, He addressed the words: Thou art Peter, and upon this Rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Heaven and earth shall pass away but these words shall not pass away. For the rain fell and the floods came and the winds blew and they beat upon that house, but it fell not because it was founded on a rock.

And because the Church is built upon a rock so that it can never fall or give way, but stands immovably, it is also secure against falling into error, in other words infallible. If it is immovable in itself, it must also be im-

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movable in its faith ; if it was infallible at the first, then, since it is indefectible, infallible it must remain to the end. Christ, the Founder of the Church, was infallible, nay as the Son of the Eternal God, He was truth itself and the fountain of all truth. The Apostles whom He made the first teachers of His Church, they too, were infallible. The Church then during the first century of its existence was under infallible teachers. Are we to believe that the gift of infallibility died away in the Church with the last of the Apostles ? That God was less zealous, less solicitous for the truth in the second century than He was in the first ?

In the Old Law, under the old dispensation, God spoke to men at sundry times and in divers manners by the mouths of His prophets, whom He raised up from time to time as occasion required to teach His people, and who were not only infallible but inspired. Besides these teachers with extraordinary gifts there was in the Jewish synagogue an ordinary magisterium or teaching body, at the head of which was the high-priest, who himself by virtue of his office had prophetic gifts. Our

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Lord bade the men of His day to pay heed religiously to those who sat in the chair of Moses, and do all things whatsoever they should tell them, though they were not to follow the example they set. And we read how Caiphas, being high-priest of that year wherein our Lord was put to death, prophesied, saying it was expedient that one man should suffer rather than that the whole nation should perish. If God vouchsafed such light and guidance to the Jewish synagogue, which was but a type and shadow of what was to come, how much more must He have done to secure in the truth and against error the Church which His only Begotten Son has founded, and into which He has poured all the merits of His Precious Blood?

But our belief in the inerrancy of the Church rests on the words and promises of Christ. Not only did He promise that He would be with those who teach and baptize in the Church to the end of the world, but He sent the Spirit of truth, who proceedeth from the Father and the Son, to teach His Church and guide it to the knowledge of all truth. “But

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the Paraclete," He said, as St. John records His words in the fourteenth chapter of his Gospel, "the Paraclete, the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My name, he will teach you all things, and bring all things to your mind, whatsoever I shall have said unto you." And again, "I will ask the Father, and He shall give you another Paraclete, that He may abide with you forever." From this it is plain that the Church has been from the first and will be to the end under the personal guidance of the Holy Ghost, and therefore infallible.

But as in man it is the head in which are all the senses, the faculty of knowledge, and the organ of speech, so it is in the Head of the Church, the Vicar of Christ on earth, that the light of divine truth shines for the guidance of all the members that are scattered far and wide over all the earth. He is the infallible teacher ; by His mouth the Holy Ghost speaks to-day as He spoke of old by the mouth of Peter. To all the Apostles with Peter at their head did Christ say : Preach the Gospel to every creature ; teach all nations, and lo, I am with you always. But to Peter alone was it said :

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“ Feed My lambs, feed My sheep ; ” to Peter alone was it said : “ But I have prayed for thee, Peter, that thy faith fail not, and thou being converted confirm thy brethren.” Peter alone was the unshaken Rock of the true faith whereon was built the Church against which the gates of hell shall not prevail. And Peter lives in his successors, fulfilling the words of the prophet Isaias : “ My Spirit that is in thee, and My word which I have put in thy mouth, will not go out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed’s seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and forever.”

XXI.

“ THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS.”

1. The communion of saints, and its meaning. A saint a holy person, especially one canonized by the Church. Degrees of saintship: in this life two classes, also in the next.
2. Communion a union of many. The bond of the communion of saints is charity. All the children of God one great family in the brotherhood of saints.
3. As members of the communion of saints we are bound to help one another. Membership in this great communion, with the duties attaching to it, stretches into the world unseen. “ Saints ” to pray for, and “ saints ” to pray to. Let us walk in the footsteps of the saints.

“ I BELIEVE in the communion of saints,” is what we say day after day as we recite the Creed, realizing only in a very vague way perhaps what the words mean. And yet there is much of meaning in them, only it needs to be unfolded and brought into the light. To begin with the latter of the two words which embody our belief. A saint is a holy person,

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in the usual sense of the word one who leads a life of heroic holiness, and especially one who has been raised by the Church to the honor of her altars. In the sense in which we use the word now, saint has a wider meaning. Saint in the Creed means a servant of the true God, one set apart from the world, as it were, and made over to the service of God. In the measure in which one is withdrawn from the world and occupied with the things of God, the things that are above, does one grow in holiness and become the more worthy to bear this name.

But there are degrees of holiness or saintship. In this life there are two classes: (1) those who are content merely with keeping the commandments, with keeping themselves just within the territory of grace, and (2) those who aim higher and strive to keep the counsels as well. So long however as one is in this life, no matter how holy, one is liable to fall: hence there is a higher form of saintship, that of those who have quitted this mortal life in God's grace and entered upon an unchanging and unending life. Of these, again, there are

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two classes: (1) those in purgatory, (2) those in heaven. Sinners, in mortal sin, are cut off from the communion of saints, but may be restored to it on repentance. Finally, those who are outside the visible body of believers may still belong to the communion of saints, if they do but live the life of the Church and are in a state of grace.

The communion of saints implies that there is fellowship between all the servants of God, for communion is a union of many. All who love God are one with God and with each other. Now there is no union of many without some bond, and the bond of the communion of saints is charity. The more we grow in charity the closer does the bond of union become, the more intimately are we united with God and with those who love Him.

Whenever there is a union of many whose bond is friendship or love, there is community of feeling and community of interests. All the children of God, all who belong to the communion of saints, are one great family whereof God is the Father. “One Lord, one Faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of all.”

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And as in every family there are close relations between the members, the strong helping the weak and each deeply interested in the well-being of each, so it is in this vast family of God's children, the communion of saints.

It is therefore our duty as members of this great family to help one another and to pray for one another that we may be saved. The charity of Christ presseth us, a charity truly Catholic, i. e., all-embracing, a charity as wide as is the world, for in all the world and in every angle and corner of it are to be found the children of God, our brethren of the household of the faith.

This divine charity, which is the bond of the communion of saints, goes beyond even the bounds of space and time. It stretches a hand across the dread abyss to where so many of our friends who are gone before and who are being purified from their sins in purgatorial fires are lifting up suppliant voices to invoke our help. They yearn for the sweetness and the peace of the eternal home, the abode of light and love, where dwell with God and with His Christ those who have passed through great

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tribulation and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

In that eternal home, the Father's house of many mansions, are the saints in the fullest and highest sense. And we have fellowship with the saints in glory. They are with God ; they see Him face to face ; they have reached the goal of their pilgrimage : they have won the crown and entered upon their rest. They are members of the Church triumphant, a glorious Church, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing. And oh ! what comfort and sweetness in the thought that they are not unmindful, in their bright and happy home above, of us pilgrims in a world of sorrow and of sin. In God as in a mirror they see all things ; they know our weaknesses and our wants ; and having themselves passed through the trials of this life they have learned to be pitiful, and they raise hands of prayer to God our Saviour in our behalf. Let us in turn be mindful of them, mindful to show them due honor as to the friends and servants of God, mindful to invoke their intercession, for it is good and profitable to do so, as the Council of Trent declares ;

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mindful above all, as they were mindful during their sojourn in this life that we have not here a lasting city, but seek one to come ; that is a folly and a wickedness to waste life's little hour in the pursuit of perishable things, and that they alone are truly wise, though the world may count them fools, who seek the things that are above where Christ sitteth at the right hand of the Father, and who busy themselves with laying up treasures there where the moth doth not consume nor thieves break through and steal.

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XXII.

“I BELIEVE IN THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS.”

1. The eleventh article of the Creed. We are all of us sinners, and all need the grace of God.
2. What sin is. The only real evil. None other evil comparable with it. High treason against God and a crime against the meek Saviour of men.
3. Let us beg our Lady of Sorrows that she may obtain for us a true horror of sin.

THIS is the eleventh article of the Creed. What sin is we all know. We must all of us say with the Royal Psalmist: “And in sins did my mother conceive me.” Every child of Adam, save one only, was conceived in sin, and every child of Adam except the same sinless Virgin, and the Baptist, and Jeremias and perhaps St. Joseph, came into the world in a state of sin. We are a fallen race, alas ! Not only has sin been beforehand with us and stained our souls through and through ere yet our eyes opened on the world, but we

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have had personal knowledge and experience of sin ; we have been in close personal contact with this monster all the days of our lives. We have looked into his eyes and felt his baleful breath upon our faces. " If any man says that he has not sinned," says St. John bluntly, " he is a liar and the truth is not in him." We know from sad experience what sin is.

But let us put aside this personal element in sin, and look at it from another point of view. Let us see what sin is in itself and in its relation to God. Sin is an offence against God ; a transgression of God's law ; any thought, word, deed, or omission contrary to the law of God. Sin is the conscious variance of the creature's will with the uncreated will of God. The only real evil in the world is sin. Look at it in what light you please, there is no other evil comparable with it. By sin man turns against his Maker and sets Him at defiance. It is high treason against the infinite Majesty of God the Creator and Conserver of all things. Man is bound to serve God and do His holy will by every title of

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justice and gratitude, and the sinner in spite of all this turns his back upon that most benign Being, closes his ears to the voice which speaks, now in accents of gentle remonstrance, now as of old in solemn and awful tones amid the thunders of Sinai, and says with the captain of the rebel angels : I will not serve. Sin is a crime against the meek Saviour of men : the sinner so far as in him lies nails that loving Lord to His cross once more and tramples under foot the blood that was poured out to save him. Sin is the greatest evil : it robs us of the greatest good, and this is the real measure of the greatness of an evil.

Let us upon this day sacred to our Lady of Sorrows, God's and our own most loving Mother, whose own soul, as the aged Simeon foretold, was pierced by a seven-fold sword of sorrow, pray to her that she may obtain for us a true hatred of sin, a true sense of its heinousness, a true sorrow for it. It hath never been heard in any age that any one sought her aid in vain. Let us go to her with a lively confidence in her tenderness and the power of her prayer. She will surely win for us, she who is

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Mother of the world's Saviour, the pardon of our sins : even if they be red as scarlet they shall be made whiter than snow, and God will once more shed the light of His countenance upon us and grant us the peace that passeth understanding.

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XXIII.

“I BELIEVE IN THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS.”

1. Sin is a breach of the law of God in thought, word, deed, or omission. Material sin and formal sin. The latter alone sin properly speaking.
2. Every formal sin either mortal or venial. Distinction between these two of faith. What a venial sin is, and what a mortal. Venial sins not to be made little of. No evil in the world comparable with it save mortal sin alone.
3. Venial sin, however, a light matter compared with mortal sin. This is the giant evil. Effects of mortal sin ; (a) kills the soul, (b) blasts all merits, (c) paralyzes the powers of the soul, (d) brings guilt and penalty.

Conclusion.—Christ alone can forgive sin, but He forgives sin through His ministers in the Church.

SIN is any wilful thought, word, deed, or omission against the law of God, by which is meant any law, be it the natural law, the positive divine law, or any human law that has binding force in conscience. The word “wilful” in the definition of sin marks the distinc-

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tion between what is called a material and what is known as a formal sin. The latter alone is sin in the proper sense of the word. What theologians call material sin is really no sin at all, but would be sin, given certain conditions. For instance : A man eats meat on a day of abstinence, or fires a shot from a gun and kills some one. Does he commit sin ? At first sight it would seem that the only answer can be, yes ; but it might turn out to be the wrong answer. It may be that he did not know that it was a day of abstinence, and the shooting may have been purely accidental. In such case the sin would be material only,—given a knowledge of the precept in the one case and of the fact in the other, a real sin,—but under the circumstances no sin at all. To constitute a formal, that is a real sin, there must be knowledge of what we do, and a full consent to the doing of it. In proportion as men have light to know the law and the law-giver, in that proportion is their sin the greater. So, if a man does not know that a certain thing is sinful, and he does that thing, it is not a sin for him. But this holds only when his not

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knowing it is no fault of his. There are some things we ought to know, and when there is question of these things, of things we might have known and should have known, then ignorance does not excuse us from sin. When we say, then, that sin is the wilful breaking of the law, we mean that it is the breaking of the law by one who knows the law, and knowing it breaks it of his own free will. And of course the sinfulness of an act depends upon the knowledge one has of its sinfulness at the time one commits it. If a person commits a sin, which in itself is grave, but knows not at the time that it is grave, it is not a grave sin for that person. And the fact that a person finds out afterwards that it was in itself grave does not make it to be grave when it was done; for it is the knowledge one has at the time the sinful act was done, not the knowledge which comes after, that determines the guilt of the sin.

Every wilful thought, word, deed, or omission against the law of God is either a venial or a mortal sin. Here is another distinction, and the most momentous of all—that between

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mortal and venial sins. It is of divine faith that all sins are not equal, that some sins are graver than others ; and this reason itself teaches, for in the relations of man with man there are offences which are worse than others. It is likewise of faith that there are sins which only weaken the life of the soul, and sins which quench the life of the soul. What then is venial sin ? A venial sin is an offence against God in a light matter, or in a grave matter, without full knowledge of its gravity or full consent of the will. It is called venial, that is pardonable, because it does not take away the life of the soul, or destroy one's friendship with God, and is therefore more easily pardoned. But may God keep us from thinking that a venial sin is of slight consequence, that it is a small matter, that we need not take any very special pains to avoid it. If we have allowed ourselves to think so, let us make all haste to be rid of so false and wicked a notion. Venial sin a small thing, indeed ! There is no evil in the universe to compare with it at all, barring mortal sin alone. Better that every thing that has life in it should perish from the

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earth, so far as mere physical suffering goes, and that the earth itself should melt away, that the sun should be turned into darkness, and the stars fall from heaven, than that one venial sin should be committed, one little lie be told, though it should hurt none but the teller. These would be physical evils, sin is a moral evil, and the two evils have no common measure. Venial sin (1) is an offence against God, and displeasing to Him ; (2) it lessens the grace of God in the soul—not the quantity but the force and fervor that are born of it ; (3) robs us of actual graces ; (4) disposes the soul to mortal sin. He who despises little things shall fall by little and little.

But after all is said, venial sin, great as it is in comparison of other evils, is small when compared with mortal sin. This is the giant evil, matchless in its enormity. Mortal sin is a sin unto death. It is the breaking of God's law in a grave matter with full light and full consent of the will. God says : "Thou shalt not do this thing : I forbid you on pain of forfeiting My friendship and My grace which is the life of your soul." And man, knowing that

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God has said this, and who God is, wilfully, deliberately does that thing. This is mortal sin. It is called mortal because it is deadly, a sin unto death. The first effect of it is to strike the soul dead. It destroys at one stroke and wipes out all the merits that the soul has ever heaped up. It kills the very power which the soul has to merit, and its dead works can never be revived. It paralyzes the powers of the soul and brings on moral blindness and hardness of heart. It brings the soul into a twofold debt of guilt and of pain.

Whither then shall we go and to whom shall we turn that we may be freed from this frightful evil? To whom, if not to Him who said, as we read in the Gospel, to the man sick of the palsy : “Be of good heart, son, thy sins are forgiven thee.” He came into the world to save us from our sins, and we have faith in the forgiveness of sins through Him our Saviour. As God He forgave sins in His own right and by His own inherent power ; as man He satisfied the justice of God and more than abundantly paid the debt due for our sins, “blotting out the handwriting of the decree

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that was against us, fastening it to the Cross.” Therefore as man, too, He had power to forgive sins, in proof whereof He wrought the miracle recorded in the second chapter of St. Mark. And that power which He possessed both as God and as Man to forgive sins, and which He exercised Himself while on earth, that same power He gave to men also to exercise in His name, saying “ Receive ye the Holy Ghost, whose sins you shall forgive they are forgiven them, and whose sins you shall retain they are retained.” Thank God, then, who has given us the victory, deliverance from our sins, through Jesus Christ our Lord ; and thank God that we are members of that one true Church in which the power of forgiving sins is exercised to-day as it was in the days of those upon whom it was first conferred by our Saviour. All who come with a contrite heart to seek forgiveness receive it ; the doors of the Church are ever open; the priest sits day after day from year’s end to year’s end in the tribunal of penance to dispense pardon freely in the name of the Redeemer and Judge ; and, as that Redeemer and Judge did in His day, so does the priest bid the repentant sinner

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to be of good heart, that his sins are forgiven him. Let us then seek the forgiveness of our sins while the gates of mercy are still wide open ; let us approach the tribunal of mercy and forgiveness which our Saviour has set up on earth, lest we be summoned with our sins upon our heads before that dread tribunal where not pardon but strict justice is dispensed. Let us invoke the sinless Mother of our Saviour, that she may win for us pardon for our sins and grace to walk always in the narrow way that leads to life.

SERMON TWENTY-FOURTH.

XXIV.

“I BELIEVE IN THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY.”

1. Death, from different points of view, a fact and a revealed truth. The mystery of mortality read in the light of revelation.
2. The last article of the Creed looks onward to the final victory over death. The doctrine of the resurrection held by the Jews and taught most explicitly in the New Testament. Reason teaches the fitness of the resurrection, and the mystery is dimly shadowed forth in the world around us.
3. Disparate condition of those who shall rise at the last day; the good to the resurrection of life, the wicked to the resurrection of judgment. Let us by good works win for ourselves a place at the right hand of the Judge on that day.

THIS last article of the Creed supposes or takes for granted a fact which is under another aspect a truth of revelation. The fact is that men die, the revealed truth is that it is appointed unto all men once to die. In all this world there is no sadder scene, yet none more

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familiar, than that in which Death is the chief actor. On all sides this scene may be witnessed. At every hour of the day and night this same tragedy is enacted somewhere, and always and everywhere, though there is endless variety in the acts that lead up to the last one, that final act is the same. Grim Death is ever the victor, and man is doomed to be vanquished evermore.

Even though we knew it not as a truth of divine revelation that all men are mortal and are doomed to die, we might reasonably infer it from the fact itself of death, that, namely, of all the countless billions that peopled the earth in the ages that are past not one single individual but has fallen under the hand of the grim reaper. This is the fact and at the same time the mystery of mortality, the meaning of which we can read only in the light of divine revelation. The race of man lies under a curse ; the decree of God has gone forth : “In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou go back into the earth whence thou wast taken ; for dust thou art, and into dust shalt thou return.” Gen. 3.19.

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We are all of us, then, doomed to die, and to return into dust. But the twelfth article of the Creed teaches us the consoling truth that we shall rise again ; that the body which falls into dust will be knit together once more and united with the soul upon the last day. This is, in the strictest sense, a truth of faith. By his own unaided reason man could never have known it at all. We might even have thought that the thing could not be, had we not God's own word for it.

The doctrine of the resurrection is clearly taught in Holy Writ. Without going at all to the Old Testament where it is not obscurely set forth, we have the clearest statement of it in the New. The Jews had always held this doctrine, and in the time of our Lord all but the Sadducees believed it. We read in the Gospel how Martha bore witness to this belief, saying to our Lord : “I know that he (Lazarus) shall rise again in the resurrection on the last day.” The great miracles which our Lord wrought in raising Lazarus from the dead, and the daughter of Jairus, and the widow's son, were all of them as many pledges of the resur-

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rection. So again was His own resurrection, the surest pledge of all, as it is the pattern of ours and the cause of it. His own voice, moreover, speaks with no uncertain sound to assure us that we shall all rise again : “ The hour cometh when all that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of Man. And they that have done good things shall come forth unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of judgment.” And St. Paul in the fifteenth chapter of his first Epistle to the Corinthians deals at length with this point, showing that to deny our resurrection would be the same as to deny the resurrection of Christ Himself. “ In a moment,” He says, “ in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet the dead shall be raised incorruptible and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption and this mortal must put on immortality.”

Reason itself, too, teaches the fitness of the resurrection ; for the union of soul and body is natural ; the one is the complement of the other ; and as the soul never dies, it is fitting that it should upon the last day be re-united

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with that which was in life its instrument for good or evil, and so should share its reward or punishment.

Even in the world around us there are, as it were, tokens of the resurrection. The mystery, as St. Paul calls it, which will be unfolded before our eyes is already dimly shadowed forth. The sun sinks to rest when the day is done, and the darkness of night like a funeral pall is spread over the earth. But with the morning the sun rises again and renews the day. And a yet more striking image of the resurrection is found in the change from winter to spring. In the winter months the trees are stripped of their foliage, the earth is bound in icy fetters, the grass is withered, and all vegetable life dies. But with the coming of the spring the leaves return to the trees, nature wakens from her deathlike sleep and rises to a new life.

It is of divine faith, then, that all men shall rise from the dead at the sound of the angel's trumpet on the last day. But what disparity in their condition ! They that have done good shall rise unto the resurrection of life, and they

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that have done evil unto the resurrection of judgment. The wicked will rise with bodies black and hideous, keenly sensible to pain, wherein their souls shall be confined as in a foul and fetid prison-house. But the just will rise with glorified bodies, bright as the sun, agile and lightsome, and in a manner spiritualized, no longer liable to corruption or to suffer pain. This is what St. Paul says: "It is sown in corruption ; it shall rise in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor, it shall rise in glory. It is sown in weakness, it shall rise in power. It is sown a natural body, it shall rise a spiritual body."

Dear brethren, it rests with us now what our lot will be in the resurrection at the last day ; whether we shall rise in glory to take our places with the blessed of the Father on the right hand of Christ, or in shame and dishonor to stand upon the left and hear from the lips of Him who died upon the Cross those awful words of malediction : "Depart from Me ye cursed into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels." "Be not deceived," says St. Paul, "God is not mocked ; if you

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sow in the flesh, of the flesh you shall reap corruption." There is no mistaking the meaning of these words. Let us, then, do good and shun evil. Let us, in the words of the Apostle, by good works make our calling and election sure, that so an entrance may be ministered unto us abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

XXV.

“I BELIEVE IN THE LIFE EVERLASTING.”

1. The shortness of life. Not worth living but for the life beyond. Even the light of natural reason has led men to look forward to another life.
2. Faith alone gives perfect assurance of a life that is everlasting. What faith tells us of our heavenly home.
3. Happiness of heaven. The beatific vision. The body will share in the happiness of the soul after the resurrection.

Conclusion.—We should often think of the happiness that is in store for us, and strive to follow ever in the footsteps of the saints.

These last words of the Creed point to the goal of our earthly pilgrimage. The life of man upon earth is but a hand-breadth; to-day we are here, to-morrow we may be gone from hence forever. We call this, and truly, a mortal life, a life that is doomed to perish and liable to pass at any moment. Even those who reach the utmost limit of the years that are allotted to man, are but short-lived. When

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they look back in their old age over the past, it seems but as yesterday when they were children, heedless of the flight of time and free from care, with all of life before them. Man goes through the little round of joys and sorrows and heartaches that make up what we call life, and all at once the shadows of the tomb are seen to gather round him and he sinks into the grave. Surely if there were nothing beyond the grave to which he could look forward, such a life as this would not be worth living. But there is something beyond the grave; there is another world and a life that knows no death. "I believe in the life everlasting." Even men who knew not the true God and Jesus Christ whom He hath sent, felt that death did not end all. Despite the fact that it holds absolute sway over all things in this world; despite the fact that all things which live upon the earth are doomed to die, men, guided only by the light of natural reason, looked forward to a life beyond the portals of the tomb. They refused to believe that that which thought and willed and reasoned and loved and yearned for lasting happiness within

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them was going to perish with the body in the dust and sleep forever in the grave. The pagan of old dreamed of groves elysian beyond the dark river of death, and our own wild Indian felt the burden of his hard lot lighter when he thought of the happy-hunting grounds.

The belief in a future life and the yearning for immortality are natural to man. Man's reason itself teaches him that he is made for some greater good and destined to some higher end than any that he can attain in this life. But it is only divine faith that can chase away from the mind every lingering shadow of doubt and give perfect assurance of the life everlasting. Our faith tells us that as surely as there is a country called Australia, or a city called Melbourne, though we may never have set foot in it ; as surely as the sun shines on the other side of the globe while it is night here, though we see it not ; so surely, and even if it were possible more surely, is there in the other world, beyond the bounds of space and time, a place that is called Heaven and a life that is everlasting. And Heaven is the Kingdom of God

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in glory and of His angels and His saints. It is God's dwelling-place, the house not made with hands, the Father's house of many mansions, the bright city of God in the skies, beautiful beyond the thoughts or imaginations of men, where death cannot enter nor sin nor sorrow, but all is life and love and joy and peace and happiness forevermore. Had I the tongue of an angel words would fail me to tell you what Heaven is and what the things are that God hath prepared for those who love him. Eye hath not seen those things, ear hath not heard them, nor have they entered into the heart of man. But the first and incomparably the greatest of them all is the vision of God Himself, which is the essential happiness of Heaven. This is the vision that is promised to the clean of heart. To this vision man cannot by the light of natural reason attain. The being of God as He is in Himself is above nature, supernatural, and therefore beyond the ken of unaided reason, which reaches only to the things that lie in the order of nature, and to the knowledge of God as an inference from these. Just as there are stars in the firmament so far above the earth

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that they cannot be seen with the naked eye, so the being of God, who dwells in light inaccessible, is so far beyond everything in nature that man has no natural faculty for seeing it. “No one knoweth the Son but by the Father, neither doth any one know the Father but the Son and he to whom it shall please the Son to reveal Him”—John 17 : 3.

And who can tell the bliss of the beatific vision ? The soul of man is athirst for the good, the true, and the beautiful, and God is truth itself, goodness itself, uncreated beauty, ever ancient and ever new. Even in this life man finds his happiness in the few fragments of truth and the poor shreds of goodness that lie about him. He is enamored with the glimpses that he gets of a beauty that quickly fades from the view, and mocks him that pursues it. But God is the fulness of truth, the fountain of goodness, and the very pattern of beauty. To see Him face to face is therefore the essential happiness of heaven.

But there are degrees in the beatific vision. Star, we are told, differs from star in brightness. Those who are highest in heaven and

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nearest to God enjoy a greater degree of bliss, yet all are rewarded there according to their works, and all enjoy a measure of happiness equal to their utmost capacity. And besides the essential glory of heaven there is the accidental glory. Not only will God fill the soul with the plenty of His house, and inebriate it with the torrents of His delights, but He will make the body share in this happiness. The bodies of the just will be glorified, no longer liable to pain, subtile, agile, and bright as the sun. The eye will be charmed with the beauty of the place, the ear ravished with a music not of earth, and all the senses will be steeped in the sweet fragrance of paradise. There, too, we shall know our own. There will be the joy of meeting with long lost loved ones, never more to part, the sweet companionship of the blessed, and above all the society of the sinless Queen of Heaven, the perfect pattern of all that is lovely and the Mother of beautiful love.

It is worth our while to make every sacrifice that is needful to win Heaven for ourselves. It is worth our while to pull up sin by

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the roots, no matter how painful the process, to walk the path of virtue even though it be strewn with thorns, to carry the cross that we may win the crown of everlasting life. Let us not lose sight of the happiness that God has in store for those who are faithful to Him. Let us think of it often, for the thought of it will lighten life's burden and make sweeter the yoke of Christ. Let us lay to heart the lesson that the saints of God have taught us, and take pattern of them. They once were weak creatures as we are. They had the same passions and the same proneness to sin ; they battled with the same world that we have to battle with. But they fought the good fight, and have won the crown. And so may we, and so with God's help will we, like them, forgetting the things that are behind and stretching forth to the things that are before, press toward the mark, to the prize of our high calling in Christ Jesus. What matter, cries one who followed in the footsteps of the saints, a little pain, a little sorrow, a little penance, a few crosses, if after a little there be an inheritance of eternal joy. For faith assures us that our

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present tribulation, which is momentary and light, worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory ; and we know that when the house of this our earthly dwelling is dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

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